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HIS ROBE OF HONOR

E. S. AND J. F. DORRANCE



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HIS ROBE OF HONOR



HIS ROBE OF HONOR

BY

E. S. AND J. F. DORRANCE

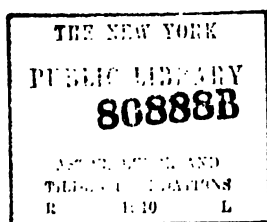


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TO
THE UPRIGHT JUDGE,
THE HONEST ATTORNEY, AND
THE JOURNALIST WITHOUT A PRICE,
WHO MADE THIS NOVEL
POSSIBLE

1101

“Conscience is a growth,” said Lora Nelson; but it is a growth dependent, like that of a rose plant, upon the cultivation of its soil, upon weeding and wise pruning, upon the grafting of new vitality when its sap grows weak.

Among mankind, there are no heroes and there are no villains, since human nature is never absolute. . . . In the garden, none can tell whether or when the plant will come into its glory, nor how many blossoms there may be.

When we see man do a splendid deed, do we applaud with all appreciation? . . . Looking out over the garden, do we marvel enough — are we *glad* enough when we spy a rose in bloom?

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HIS ROBE OF HONOR

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HIS ROBE OF HONOR

CHAPTER I

IN TRACTION'S LAIR

AN atmosphere of tension filled the inner office of Nelson, Sheen & Partland, attorneys for Traction Consolidated. Two men faced each other across its ample desk, one obviously affected by the charged ether, the other superbly at his ease.

"It is a relief to meet you, Randolph, when we don't need to be clutching at each other's throats," began Robert Partland, junior member of the firm, fingering a paper knife with a nervousness that did not match the well-simulated ease of his remark.

Julian Randolph laughed the low, deep-throated laugh that ingratiated him with his enemies as well as his friends. "At least, it has the charm of novelty."

Settling his large, well-muscled figure more comfortably in the leather chair on the visitor's side of Partland's desk, he glanced at the older, smaller man with an expression that was, under the circumstances, artistically casual.

"Your firm has sent for me because it is getting tired of the legal circus we've been staging," he added with no query at the end of his tone.

Partland suddenly dropped the paper knife and with it his pose.

"Decidedly tired of it — with Lawyer Julian Randolph as ringmaster!" he exclaimed.

"At least, I've never been able to play you as clown, Partland." Julian's glance was delightfully amiable, as if the two often met outside the ring of legal combat.

"But you do it, confound you — you do it by hook or crook!" cried Partland, lapsing into their professional belligerence. "You've won every personal damage suit you've ever taken against our corporation. You approach by straight ways when you can and — pardon me — you don't hesitate to stroll into the by-paths of the law when it seems advisable. Verdicts for your clients have become almost certainties and you know how to advertise them. To be perfectly frank, Randolph, your practice is growing too fast to suit us."

"And you sent for me to offer —" Julian smiled gently at the end of the cigar which he was lighting.

"Just that. We're going to offer you a consideration to be with us instead of against us."

The super-charged moment was upon them. Partland stared shrewdly, nervously, imperatively across the desk at his visitor; but an inopportune abstraction seemed to have seized that person. His dark eyes still gazed toward the bright tip of the Havana and several times he inhaled deeply, as if absorbed by enjoyment of its excellence.

In exasperation Partland sank back and waited. For several years he and his associate Traction attorneys had been fighting this sphinx-like, but always interesting, young man at his own game. The skill with which he had unfailingly made boomerangs of their deadliest bolts had come to seem inevitable, and the conviction had

lately seized them that Julian Randolph must be eliminated from personal damage suit practice.

As their own records were not sufficiently clean to allow them safe recourse to the bar association and disbarment proceedings against him, they perforce had fallen back upon the somewhat humiliating and decidedly more expensive expedient of offering him an annual retainer to buy his inactivity.

"Take on that rogue Randolph, no matter what it costs," had been the ultimatum of the head of Traction Consolidated. "If you don't, he'll own one of our roads first thing you know."

Accordingly the delicate negotiations had been opened, the various bluffs made and counter-bluffs met, and tentative terms of agreement approached. Randolph had been induced to come to the office of his famous and reputable rivals this February afternoon to complete the prohibitive deal.

A smaller man than he would have insisted that the Traction attorneys come to him. Julian Randolph, however, was as broad of mind as he was of physique. The very fact that he had the whip hand made him generous.

Disappointment had shadowed his mood when told that Mr. Partland would see him for the firm. He had hoped to deal directly with Bruce Nelson, senior member, one of the leaders of the metropolitan bar. Such an audience would have been more definite testimony to the depth of the hole he had made in the Traction treasury.

At once he had laughed at himself, however, as he did when occasionally his ambitions soared above the probable. That "Julian Randolph laugh," much written

of by the press, much enjoyed by his colleagues, much dreaded by his victims, struck the key of his inner state — astute, but never bitter; cultivated to express pleasantly his hardest deductions. To his laugh and the mental rampart which was its sounding board had been accredited much of the man's success. In this instance it reminded its creator that Bruce Nelson would be unlikely to forget his dignity so far as to treat directly with one who was as notorious for doubtful legal practices as immune from their consequences. All details of such sordid matters as personal-damage suits, the senior member would naturally leave to his subordinates.

No sign of this slight inner dissatisfaction showed, however, to the lawyer waiting impatiently across the desk. Irritated by Julian's deliberation, he was finally moved to a blunt reminder.

"Our question is standing, Randolph. How much do you want?"

The visitor bent to flick the ash from his cigar with the smallest of his long white fingers. "I should think," he said, with an engaging upward glance, "that twenty-four thousand dollars a year might recompense me."

Partland frowned. "Twenty-four thousand a year? That's a holdup, Randolph. It's an unheard-of retainer for doing nothing."

"I like to do things," suggested Julian. "And my percentage of damages recovered has averaged more than that."

"But think of the strain of such a practice." Partland tutored his face and voice back into suavity. "Think of the danger of it. Why, man, you must be kept in a continual state of nerves!"

"I have never been in a state of nerves, Mr. Partland. Therefore dangers and strains are my recreation."

For a moment Robert Partland inspected the maker of this assertion, forced, despite his professional antagonism toward the man, to acknowledge the magnificent physical equipment which had made his achievements possible.

"You're a wonder," he admitted. "But you know as well as I do that Traction Consolidated has got to have you. You've set your price, and I suppose there's nothing to do but yield. We will pay you twenty-four thousand a year on the understanding that you never take, directly or indirectly, any case in which the corporation is defendant."

"That goes." Julian nodded carelessly.

"And, in addition, you're not to disband your witness staff."

"You ought to know, Partland, that I'd scarcely do that. One never disbands a staff of witnesses like mine. They know too much."

The older man regarded this continued acquiescence with suspicion.

"The company wants the privilege of calling upon them when necessary," he added somewhat hurriedly. "Oh, not as a regular thing, of course, but when we have to fight fire with fire. Will you — do you agree?"

"If you pay them properly." The big lawyer smiled comfortably. "Expert testimony, the sort that is proof against your own cross-examination, for instance, is worthy of its hire."

"That part of it will be all right. Traction knows

and pays its friends. Now, Mr. Randolph, I've drawn up a memorandum which we will sign, then consider the matter closed."

"You would put it on paper — a deal like this?" Julian's lifted brows and contracting eyes, as well as his words, remarked his surprise.

"We consider it safer."

"I see, Mr. Partland. You don't hold to the adage of honor among thieves?"

Traction's lawyer leveled upon his visitor an irate glance. "We should scarcely classify ourselves as such," he said.

The younger man's first reading of the document soon tendered compelled a nod of admiration, so cleverly was it worded. In no line of it was there a hint of "deal," of restraint, of prohibition. Julian Randolph was to be "retained" as "associate counsel" of Traction Consolidated at a stated salary of two thousand dollars a month. The facilities of his office were to be at the disposal of the accredited Traction attorneys at all times, but his appearance was not to be required in any case.

The shrewdness of this last item especially diverted him, providing, as it did, against any sport which the newspapers might have made should he have appeared publicly for the monopoly he had mulcted so heavily in former practice.

"There is one thing you have forgotten," he observed at last. "Suppose you insert that the offer was tendered voluntarily by Traction Consolidated. In case this interesting contract should ever chance to become public property, I shouldn't want any one to think that I had held you up for two thousand dollars a month. If

I were going in for that sort of thing, I'd be ashamed of such a low price."

With a barely suppressed grunt of indignation, Partland made the suggested insert, called a stenographer, and ordered two fresh copies. Then, feeling that the strain of the interview was over, he expanded into a more cordial attitude.

"How was it that you won the Smulsky case, Randolph?"

It was characteristic of the big lawyer that, while still retaining his pleasant exterior, he promptly checked this inquiring into one of his most daring coups.

"You might have a dictagraph concealed," he returned with a glance around. "Always remember, Partland, that the services I am selling you people are purely negative. I am no law faculty."

A pause that was uncomfortable for at least one of the pair reigned until the stenographer returned with copies of the memorandum. Hurriedly affixing his signature to both, Partland passed them across the desk.

But instead of completing the documents, Julian again seemed filled with distaste for them.

"Why not dispense with this black and white proposition?" he asked. "I never like to sign anything except checks."

Partland could scarcely control his exasperation. "I've got to have it in writing to arrange with the treasurer for your monthly payments," he explained. "It's six of one to half a dozen of the other. Haven't I signed it?"

"Yes, you have, but you've got to do better than that." With his nail Randolph traced the irregular

line of Partland's signature. "Kindly make it 'Nelson, Sheen & Partland, attorneys for Traction Consolidated, by Robert Partland.' Since you insist on writing, I prefer to have you all in on the agreement."

"From the way you've won your cases, I'd never have believed super-cautiousness to be one of your traits," muttered Partland. But he altered the signatures.

Once more the papers were passed to Randolph. And once more the traction attorney endured a taxing wait. For still the pen of the younger lawyer hesitated.

In truth, the well-oiled machinery of Julian Randolph's mind was whirring through the possibilities of that document under certain eventualities. None of the complications conjured up seemed perilous, however. His present care against involving himself was merely the result of habit.

"Very well," he announced at last to the tortured go-between. "For once I'll break my rule."

Rapidly he scrawled across the copies in turn. The stenographer witnessed the signatures and handed one agreement to each of the principals. Citizens injured in the future by the cars and trains of Traction Consolidated had lost their likeliest damage magnet.

The two men did not bother to shake hands. There were sufficient old scores between them to make the mere thought of such affectation an offense. With a formal bow Julian left the room, his thoughts already busy with the sort of practice he must seek to replace the cases he was now under a princely retainer to decline.

CHAPTER II

THE FIRST TIME IT MATTERED

HALF way across the stately reception room, which in the suite of Nelson, Sheen & Partland replaced the usual bare outer office, Julian Randolph's glance was impelled to the right. He stood still with an odd sensation that something vital in his life had happened. Miss Lora Nelson was sitting there, her eyes turned full upon him. She appealed to him as uncommonly lovely this afternoon, posed as if for a portrait in the high wing-chair she had chosen.

For a moment he studied the details of the picture, the lavender of her gown and gray of her furs; the long, clean lines of her figure; the russet of her hair, the pallor of her skin, the black-lashed gray of her eyes. Then he realized that the quality of her recognition invited his approach.

His first sensation of pleasure was keen, for, since being introduced to her several years before, his acquaintance with the niece of the most famous of Traction's attorneys had been decidedly unsatisfactory.

That initial meeting had taken place at a country club where he had been the guest of a mate of college days. His horsemanship in a steeplechase had attracted the girl's interest, yet afterward her nods when passing him by chance on the avenue or dining in the same restaurant had been of the utmost formality.

Quite recently, however, he had been able to do her a service; and there was no mistaking the queenly summons she now sent him. With quickening pulses he crossed the room and bowed before her.

"You are not waiting for legal advice, I hope?" he asked in his charming way. "If you are, I am going to turn traitor to my profession and give you a bit free — don't!"

"Is the law such a terrible business that you feel forced to turn traitor?" she demanded lightly.

"Yes — when it is about to ensnare some one just like you."

At the deepening timbre of his voice and the ardor of his brilliant eyes, a slight color tinged the girl's cheeks.

"I am waiting for my uncle," she explained more formally. "Already he has taxed my patience beyond the most autocratic relative's privilege."

"His relationship, then, is his only possible defense," said Julian.

Glancing up from under the velvet brim of her hat, Lora Nelson smiled in spite of herself. The whole vital look of the man induced her leniency; the contrasting whiteness and power of the hand that pushed back his hair induced it; the very thickness and blackness of the hair somehow aided. She smiled up at him, the gray eyes beaming into the black ones; and all the strange, instinctive coolness of their past acquaintance seemed melted in the sunshine of her smile.

"I am particularly glad to meet you to-day," she said. "I've wanted an opportunity to thank you properly for that good turn on the subway train."

"And I am delighted to give you the opportunity, Miss Nelson, but I'd rather you did not use it."

"Of course I'll use it," she retorted. "My bracelet has three diamonds in it and is connected with some tender memories."

"I'd really rather you did not thank me. Any man —"

"But any man might not have succeeded," she declared. "He was a villainous-looking fellow, as well as an obviously accomplished pickpocket. With the bracelet in his hand and the train just pulling into a station, he'd have paid about as much attention to the command of an ordinary mortal as he does to one of the Ten Commandments."

"He wasn't exactly the sort one would care to precede up a dark alley," Randolph admitted, his show of modesty deepening to absolute embarrassment.

"The control you exercised over him was simply marvelous," she continued. "I spoke to Uncle Bruce about it. I heard you mutter 'Give it back — you!' and the next moment he was handing over my treasure, which I hadn't even missed. Can it be that you are a professional hypnotist, in addition to your other accomplishments?"

The insistence of the girl, the delight her refined beauty gave him, the achievement of this personal chat which, subconsciously, he had long hoped for, surprised Julian Randolph into a reply which, under ordinary circumstances, he certainly would have modified. Somehow, while his eyes were held by the fine directness of her eyes, his lips spoke the truth.

"My influence is easily explained. The man happened to be a client of mine."

Scarcely had he voiced the admission before he realized his blunder.

"A client of yours, that — that *pickpocket*?" murmured Lora and rose with the words.

All their delightful new *camaraderie* vanished. Miss Nelson summoned the manner with which she dismissed a bore. Into her mind rushed all she had heard in the past of Julian Randolph, lawyer. "Successful, yes," hearsay admitted, "but through what methods?" By many he was openly called a "gilt-edged shyster." She remembered unpleasant rumors of his alleged jury fixing and hints of the perjured testimony which he had procured. Having lived for years in the house of her uncle, she had absorbed more or less legal knowledge, and the practices she knew to be credited to the man before her she had scarcely believed possible of him. She had felt keen interest in his meteoric career and had often openly argued that he be given the benefit of the doubt.

But now he had acknowledged shamelessly that he held a pickpocket in the relation of client!

"However it was brought about," she observed in the most frigid tone known to good breeding, "I am sincerely grateful to you. I hope you will be on hand if I encounter any more of your — your clients, Mr. Randolph."

Julian felt the chill of a sudden drop in temperature after a delightful, precocious day of early Spring. His dismissal was definite. Although the methods of his legal practice had counted against him socially before, this was the first time he had ever been clumsy enough to bring such odium upon himself and the first time that it had mattered.

So preoccupied was Lora by the regret that caught her as she watched the young lawyer's dignified retreat across the room, that she did not notice Robert Part-

land entering from his private office with the odd, sliding walk characteristic of him, therefore felt no wonder that the expression on the face of her old friend should be so accurate an illustration of her own thoughts. And she could not possibly have heard what he was saying to himself, since he was only thinking the words.

"That shyster is not going to cast his spell on — Too absurd! He couldn't hoodwink Lora Nelson!" Despite this reassurance, the weighty man's departing footsteps slithered with alarm.

The habitual cheer on the countenance of Julian Randolph was quite clouded over as he waited outside the office for the elevator. He was self-angry that he had so fumbled in the face of opportunity. And it soothed him not at all to remind himself that, having made his own bed, he should be willing to lie in it. At each mental return to the picture of the lavender-clad, russet-haired Lora, with the sensitive curve of mouth and the challenging directness of gaze, something within him flouted this truism. "I'll be damned if I will!" he muttered with all the violence of the door which had just clanked behind his descent.

On the short walk to his office, he became too pre-occupied to notice the jostling Nassau Street crowd. He was deep in a trial of the feelings which Lora Nelson had aroused within him. The evidence was alarming. All the witnesses of his heart and mind were heard both for and against his unprecedented sensations. With a commingling of fierce joy and sickening dread, he at last pronounced his own verdict. He loved the girl — had loved her all along. He desired her more than anything in the world.

It was characteristic that, this momentous decision reached, he fell to studying method. Instinctively he knew her sort. She would give herself where she loved in return, but she would love only where she admired and approved. He realized that he must climb farther up the ladder of his profession before he could hope for her favor. Well, giving up the prosecution of damage suits was an upward step! The value of this thought, however, was at once discounted by the feel of the illegal agreement in his inner coat pocket.

There returned to him in clutching reproach memories of his ambitions during law-school days at Harvard. There had been no hint of ambulance chasing in them; none of jury fixing or of the various legal tricks which he had gradually come to play without a second's scruple. How his early principles had slumped! How irreconcilable they seemed with his present principles! In those days he never could have considered the defense of a pickpocket, of whose guilt he held no doubt; he would have been unable to command the return of Miss Nelson's diamond bracelet.

Although honest in his self-appraisal, Julian was human enough to search for excuses for himself, shifting places for the blame. He found several that were more or less comfortable. To be a successful lawyer one must win cases. A host of the big men of the bar in their earlier days had used the very methods which he was using as stepping-stones!

But satisfaction from this sort of argument was only momentary. He knew that *she* would not excuse, that *she* would not consider shifting the blame. The fire that burned within him, blazing for her, did not

cheer him. Rather, it singed his self-respect and parched his hope.

With the street throng jostling his elbows and trampling his toes, Randolph's mental stress induced him to make a vow before his slow walk ended — a solemn vow, this, to the effect that his practice of law should mend its ways until he could command the respect and favor of the first woman who had ever deeply stirred him.

Almost immediately, however, the nature of his recent life and work caused him to qualify even so sacred a resolve. The mending of established ways was gradual at the best and need not involve necessarily any delay of starting over again. There must be some dignified and more expeditious way of climbing into respectability, he assured himself. He would find the rungs.

CHAPTER III

THE GUN TOTER

A STRUGGLE for the leadership of the organization's rock-ribbed assembly district in the heart of old Greenwich Village — where the streets run in circles and even the poor live in separate houses — had been at fever heat for a month. On the program of Marcus Nordhoff, boss of the party, was inscribed the decision that Martin Dennis, who had led the district for twenty years, should sit no longer in the councils of the mighty. The autocrat's only explanation was a reference to the fact that, several times since the last primary, the Celt had "bucked over the traces."

"I ain't no Russian and you ain't no Czar," had been Dennis' defiance at the time of the first revolt. "I'm free born, and all white, and ye'll keep yer hands off of me or I'll know the reason why!"

Marcus Nordhoff had bided his time and the actual struggle for the command of the district might have been postponed indefinitely had not a worry arisen in his mind over his younger brother, Clifford. The latter had developed a wildness that particularly troubled the boss because it reminded him of a certain period in his own youth. He himself had only improved when a great responsibility had been thrust upon him, and he believed that the only chance to reform Cliff lay in loading him with some such burden. He had deter-

mined to make his younger brother leader of the Village district in place of old man Dennis, who had long been a thorn in his imperious side. So the lines had been drawn for the bitterest factional fight the party had ever known.

Martin Dennis had been vehement in his rage at the first intimation that he was to have opposition. His roars changed to snorts of disgust, however, when he learned that Clifford Nordhoff was the man picked for the contest against him. Although the word nepotism was not in his vocabulary, he voiced in no crippled terms his scorn of the leader's preference for relatives.

If broken heads counted for votes, the Village might well have been considered of congressional strength, for, from the beginning, there had been much blood-letting. Ambulance surgeons from the Sisters' hospital that stood on the rim of the district, had expressed the fear that an annex would be needed if the war continued.

Every man, woman and child, except the scattering few who belonged to the opposing party, had taken sides. The actual voters were pretty evenly divided, most of the younger men siding with Cliff Nordhoff and forcing the physical clashes. A majority of the women and all of the children were for Martin Dennis, for they remembered the joyous outings they had taken at his expense on the occasions of the annual Dennis excursion to College Point.

On account of his advancing age, the old Irishman had been persuaded to leave the militant issues of the campaign to his son Michael, a boisterous teamster whose thirty-two years by a coincidence matched the age of Clifford Nordhoff, even to the same birthday. Cliff

himself had been held in leash by the trained primary campaigners with whom his brother had surrounded him.

Although these two young men had repeatedly promised to "eat each other alive," good luck and shrewd management so far had prevented the cannibalism. Particularly had it been impressed upon Cliff that his only hope of success at the polls lay in keeping out of the brawls which were nightly features of the campaign. Long a "gun toter," he had protested so strenuously against giving up his weapon that the sharp command of the boss himself had been required to bring about the disarmament.

The police of the district arose early on Primary Day, certain that before night they would have fully earned the stipend paid them by the city for preserving a semblance of peace. The men of the outgoing detail took extra hitches in their belts and saw to it that their sticks were ready for use. At the station house, the entire complement of reserves was held in readiness for the riot call that might sound at any minute.

The early voting was heavy and marked with no disorder; the working men of the district hurried into the polling places, cast their ballots and hastened to their jobs. But the police were not deceived by the orderliness of these first hours. To them it was the ominous calm before real trouble broke.

The usual watchers for both factions stood outside the polling places, but seemed content to respect the law of electioneering distances. These workers glared at each other, hurled taunts, muttered threats, but kept apart, which was all that the bluecoats could reasonably demand.

Shortly after eleven o'clock Clifford Nordhoff, smiling and confident, sauntered up to a group of his watchers near a barber-shop polling place. He was detailing his plans for the celebration which he was to give the faithful that night when there arose a disturbance at the entrance of the shop.

Two young men were thrown bodily into the street. Picking themselves up, they hurried toward the group surrounding Clifford and angrily detailed their woes.

"That big stiff of a Finnegan, he thrun us out like as if we was bums," cried the sharp-faced one.

"Wouldn't even let us look at a vote ticket," mourned the other. "Said we was floaters!"

"Finnegan, eh?" exclaimed the young candidate. "That lunk of a Dennisite? We'll see about this. You fellows come along with me."

One of his lieutenants seized him by the arm, advising that he let the rebuff pass, urging that they could vote the "floaters" at a precinct where their own men were in charge and where, consequently, there could be no argument.

"And let Finnegan have the laugh on me?" retorted Cliff. "Not in a month of Sundays!"

"Then if you're bound to have a row, let me start it," observed his supporter sagely. "You can't afford to be mixing it up so early in the game."

An imprecation sprang from the young man's lips as he impatiently pushed his adviser to one side. "Come along, you two!" he commanded the rejected voters.

As he started toward the polling place, a policeman stopped him. "Can't let you through, Mr. Nordhoff. It's again' my orders."

"That's all right, Munson," Cliff assured him.

"I've got to go in and talk some sense into that fellow Finnegan. I'll look out for you if anything's said, and I won't forget that you turned your back, either."

Realizing the young man's important relationship and figuring him as the next leader of the district, the patrolman did not deem it wise to use force, law or no law. He fell back, and Clifford strode up to the barber-shop, his henchmen at his heels.

At that moment a slim youth detached himself from the group of Dennis watchers, and darted down the street. He knew where Michael Dennis was waiting for just such an alarm as he now carried.

The election officials within the polling place experienced a change of heart with the appearance of the candidate, who gave every evidence of courting trouble. Even Finnegan, loyal Dennis partisan that he was, did not feel called upon to risk an encounter with the hard-hitting, younger Nordhoff. So the pair of "floaters" were voted in triumph and soon departed for other pastures.

"I don't want to hear of this happening again," declared Clifford as he was leaving. "If you throw out another of my votes, I'll come back and clean out the place proper."

There was increased assurance in his stride as he sauntered back to the corner where the watchers awaited him.

At the same moment, Michael Dennis, his face choleric from resentment of the outrage reported to him by the fleet-footed scout, hurried up a side street.

As the two young men met at the corner, the more cautious of the by-standers edged beyond the zone that seemed so heavily charged with danger.

"What d'you mean, butting into a polling place?" young Dennis demanded. "Do you think you can get away with a violation like that — say?"

"If you'd been a bit sooner, you'd have seen me get away with it," returned Cliff, with his taunting laugh.

"And if I'd been here a bit sooner you wouldn't have gone in," retorted the other, adding an epithet that is provocative of combat in districts less given to trouble than certain corners of Greenwich Village.

Clifford's whole being blazed with the instantaneous rage for which he was noted, and Dennis squared off to meet the fistic attack which, thus frankly, he had invited. But the brother of the boss did not strike.

Instead, he whipped an automatic pistol from his pocket, and, with an unexpectedness that brought a gasp from the crowd, fired.

Michael Dennis turned, took one faltering step, then crumpled on the pavement.

CHAPTER IV

BY GRACE OF "PULL"

THE Nordhoff faction did not wait for the verdict of the ambulance surgeon that young Dennis was dead, but instantly began preliminary preparation for Clifford's defense. As Patrolman Munson approached on the run, the murderer passed his weapon to the nearest of his henchmen. Swiftly the gun changed from hand to hand until it disappeared in the gathering crowd.

"You come with me," was the policeman's sharp command as he clapped a hand on the candidate's shoulder.

"Hold your horses, fool!" cried Cliff, trying to shake off his grip.

But the patrolman had at last forgotten relationships, and gruffly insisted upon making the arrest.

"Lot of good it will do you to arrest me," urged the younger Nordhoff. "Can't you see that I shot in self-defense? I had to get him or he'd have got me. The coroner will let me go in a minute — just as soon as he hears the facts."

Several of Clifford's supporters echoed this declaration. Men of the Dennis faction, however, were equally assertive that the murder had been done in cold blood. For a few intense moments a general clash seemed imminent, but was averted by the arrival of one of the seasoned campaigners sent into the district by the boss.

He took command with a firm hand. "You go along with the officer, Cliff, and keep your mouth shut. The rest of you beat it over to headquarters and wait there until the coroner sends for you."

Clifford was moved to protest. "Good God, man, it won't do for me to be arrested to-day! I'm a candidate."

"For the electric chair," hissed one of the Dennis faction. "I'd like the job of throwing the switch!"

"You do as I tell you," commanded the campaigner even more sharply than before. "Take him along, officer!"

"Get word to my brother," called the rash young man over his shoulder. "He'll take the kinks out of this snarl in no time."

Half an hour later the high-powered automobile of Marcus Nordhoff drove up to the station house, and the owner, his face drawn with worry and his step impatiently active, disappeared within. He found his incorrigible younger brother in the captain's room, tilted back in his chair with his feet on a desk, puffing away on a black cigar as contentedly as if paying a social call.

"Pretty mess you've made of things, haven't you?" the boss exclaimed when the police captain had stepped considerably outside and closed the door.

"Had to do it, Mark," admitted Cliff, at once letting fall the mask of bravado which he had assumed for the benefit of his followers. "He's been gunning for me all the month."

"How in hell did *you* come to be toting a gun? They told me they'd taken it away from you."

"They did strip me of a couple of regular cannon."

The younger attempted a brave smile that turned out to be rather timorous. "You wouldn't have me rambling around this district on primary day without a barker, would you?"

"You'd be a sight better off at this moment, if you had obeyed me," the boss declared wearily. "Now you've lost the election and you'll be in more luck than you deserve if you don't have to stand trial for murder. It's a bad morning's work, Cliff. I wish to God I'd never thought of running you for leader!"

"But you can get me clear, can't you, Mark?" For the first time there sounded something akin to apprehension in Clifford's voice. "You won't go back on me in a pinch like this? It's an open-and-shut case that the coroner can settle. Dennis was just going to pull when I —"

"Don't lie to me, Cliff! We'll have to do enough of that before the jury. Mike Dennis wasn't packing a gun to-day."

"Then some of his gang sneaked it after I shot, to make it look black for me."

"Quit lying to me!" The elder brother's tone was calculated to command obedience. "There's no sense in it. You lost your head and killed a man. I'm ashamed of you and for you. If you weren't my kid brother —"

"Mark!" The prisoner's face quivered with appeal. "You're not thinking of going back on me, now that I'm in this hole? Remember that if I go up river, it will surely pull down your house of cards. You've *got* to get me off!"

"Of course I'm not going back on you, but for both

our sakes change your tune. Get a sorry look on and, above all else, don't open your mouth."

Systematically the boss set to work to tangle the wheels of justice with the chains of his party influence. He had ten spirited minutes with the friendly coroner who had come to hold an inquest, during which the official was forcefully reminded of just who had made him. Clifford's freedom on a self-defense verdict was demanded as return.

"I'll get an awful panning from the newspapers," mourned the coroner, who was vain-glorious to a degree.

"You'll get a worse one from the party if you don't pull us out of this," was the retort of the boss.

The inquest was held back a few hours, that Nordhoff witnesses might be properly coached. Most of them considered that perjury was a light price to pay for favors such as the all-powerful one could distribute. Half a dozen eye-witnesses were soon ready to swear that Michael Dennis had opened the argument, that he had been in the act of drawing his weapon when Cliff had fired to save himself. Two witnesses were found at headquarters who declared themselves certain that they had seen one of the Dennis faction run away with Michael's gun. Several others testified that they had heard the man now dead repeatedly threaten to "get" Cliff before the campaign ended.

These alleged facts were told late that afternoon to a carefully picked jury, under guidance of the friendly coroner's questions. Members of the Dennis faction, eager to give another version of the killing, were not permitted to take the stand, and were reduced to detailing their protests to reporters.

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Under command of the determined, steely eyes of the boss, the coroner held his firmness to the end, even retiring with the jury to make certain that they returned a properly worded verdict. That it freed the younger Nordhoff on the ground of self-defense was a foregone conclusion. But it relieved the murderer far more than it did the boss and the official who had engineered it, for they heard already the clamor of an outraged public.

CHAPTER V

A FEMININE COMPLICATION

THE metropolis awoke next morning to revel in the details of the Nordhoff crime and in revulsions of moral fervor against the snap judgment of the easily controlled coroner's jury. Not only did the official in charge come in for the panning which he had expected from the newspapers, but Mark Nordhoff also was seized upon by the fierce, reprobating fingers of the press, and branded an accessory after the fact. Realizing opportunity, the leaders of the opposition party were clamorous in their demands that the case be reopened.

From Bronx to Battery, from farthest Queens to the center of Richmond, the Nordhoff case was the subject of discussion, on suburban trains, on ferry boats, on street cars. And the office of Julian Randolph was no exception to the rule of the morning.

"Some murder lawyer out of a fat fee, if the boss gets away with that raw coroner deal," observed Morris Comsky, Julian's junior partner, a worthy born to an interest in all fees, whether or not there was possibility of their coming to his firm. "It's against union rules, or ought to be."

Miss Roxana Frisbee, undoubtedly the most attractive retainer of the law office in the capacity of emergency witness, showed by a movement toward the edge

of her chair that she, also, was interested in the subject. Randolph noticed that her long dark lashes drooped to screen a peculiar look that had crowded out the wonted humor of her eyes.

"What do you think, Julian?" she asked. "Will he get away with it?"

Randolph smiled the frank relish of an expert about to give a disinterested opinion. "If I were Mr. Clifford Nordhoff, I should go while the going is good."

"But the coroner freed him — said it was a clear case of self-defense," persisted the young woman.

"Which is the worst possible thing that could have happened to him. I'm surprised that Mark Nordhoff showed such bad judgment. He has been spoiled by an over-plus of power, I think. He seems to have forgotten that the public still exists to be coddled, to demand the right to deliberate judgment by a full jury of peers and after regular trial. He's trying to toss out raw beef when he should have cooked the tenderloin to a brown finish and served it with all the garnishments. Indeed yes, if I wore Clifford Nordhoff's shoes, I shouldn't try to save sole leather. To vary the metaphor, I'd fade like a violet from a late frost."

Covsky proffered argument: "But where can he fade to, now that extradition has spread over the map of the world like a plague through a smitten army corps?"

"Besides," added Miss Frisbee, with a sigh, "the boss' pull will keep them from reopening his brother's case."

Julian glanced up at her sharply. "One would almost think you had the interest of public justice at heart, Roxana," he observed, before turning to his

partner. "Tell you what I'll do, Morris. I'll bet you a dinner that brother Cliff drops out of sight, and that the district attorney can't find him when the indictment is ready. Mark Nordhoff will see belated daylight this morning and send that gun-toting brother into some dingy cyclone cellar."

"You're on," assented the junior partner readily. "It would be the ruin of Mark Nordhoff to have his brother convicted of murder, and he'll bluff it out on the line of his pull."

"Would it really ruin him?" asked Miss Frisbee, a certain eagerness showing through the studied carelessness of her query.

Randolph expressed the conviction that such procedure would spell the end of Nordhoff's bossism, that even the organization party could not countenance such flagrancy.

"And, as sure as the Lord made little apples," he added, "if they ever get Cliff on trial after that obvious play with the coroner's jury yesterday afternoon, only a miracle can prevent his conviction."

As though dismissing the topic from his mind, the big lawyer returned to the business of his own office. But while he was going over a couple of minor cases with his partner, he noticed that Roxana Frisbee sat staring in a preoccupied fashion out the window. It was with a perceptible start that she returned to the present when he directly addressed her.

"We'll need you, Roxana, when our old friend and trouble-maker, Million Mulligan, comes up for trial." He gave her an appreciative smile. "Million is in particularly wrong this time and we're going to need some of our very prettiest swearing to get him off.

Here's a transcript of what we expect from you." He handed her several typewritten sheets.

"When does the case come up?" she asked.

Julian referred to his docket book. "Not for a couple of weeks. But we shall need at least two rehearsals before trial. You'll be on hand, of course?"

"Do I ever fail you? Still, if it does not matter to you, and if it won't interfere with the case, I think I'll run down into the country for a week. I'm tired out and need a rest." As Roxana spoke she watched her employer anxiously.

"Wish I could take a dose of the same medicine," he commented, then at once rebuked the expression with a shake of the head, as a reminding thought of the new motive behind his ambitions took command. "Keep in touch with the office, girl. We never know when we may want our star witness."

For a moment the young woman lingered, urged by the forlorn hope that Comsky would have the discretion to return to his own office. She treasured the few scant moments she had alone with Julian, all the more because she compelled most of them through her own scheming. But this morning the little junior partner seemed dense to mental telepathy. Lighting a fresh cigar, he sat, glued to his chair, across the desk from the head of the firm.

"I'll keep in touch." She spoke from the door in a voice crisp with disappointment.

"Have a good time," called Julian cheerily, without glancing up.

"Be a good girl, Roxana," added Comsky.

Sending the crass one an indignant glance, she stepped into the hall. There she paused to tie about

her hat the latest in lace veils, an omnipresent costume accessory with her which served as an effective disguise when she ventured into the business section.

At the portal of the building she paused again before entering the storm which raged without, a petite and decidedly attractive-looking bit of a woman, dark-haired, dark-eyed, delicate of feature and form, smartly dressed. Naturally a creature of impulse, she seldom hesitated in reaching decisions, but the step she contemplated was so vital that she wanted a minute or two for consideration.

"Julian thinks that Cliff Nordhoff will fade away to-day," she mused. "He thinks, just as surely, that the authorities will reopen the case. And, of course, Cliff's conviction will ruin Mark Nordhoff, strip him of pull, reduce him to his proper level. Julian has second-sight in such matters."

The small face behind the veil colored with her consideration of the possibilities of the situation. Next to one longing, Roxana desired most of anything in the world the downfall of the all-powerful boss. Her first ambition, being solely a personal matter between Julian Randolph and herself, could wait. Indeed, it would have to wait. But this Primary Day crime seemed to offer the opening against Mark Nordhoff for which she had waited so long and so impatiently. She held nothing against Cliff except his relationship and it was going to be hard on him, but —

"I'll do it," she decided in a voice that was none the less determined because very low.

She stepped into a compartment of the revolving door and faced the storm, the re-kindled hate within her defying the cold.

CHAPTER VI

INTO THE COUNTRY

JULIAN RANDOLPH had often declared that Roxana Frisbee could go farther with a telephone than the ordinary male detective equipped with a dictagraph and a pair of stenographers. And he would have appreciated her execution this morning, had he overheard the conversations by which she picked up the trail she had decided to follow.

From the seclusion of her own tiny apartment, she first called the residence number of Clifford Nordhoff. There was a world of suspicion in the feminine voice that answered, and Roxana promptly assumed the tone and mannerisms of a certain Marie O'Brien, whom she knew to have charge of the private exchange at the headquarters of the organization party. After announcing her borrowed name, she stated that Cliff Nordhoff was wanted at the office.

A relieved "Oh!" sounded over the wire, followed by a sudden, gracious explanation. "This is Mrs. Clifford Nordhoff. I didn't recognize your voice at first, Marie. Mr. Nordhoff has gone to meet his brother and I don't know just when he will return."

"How long has he been gone?" asked Roxana, alias Marie, delighted by her success as private exchange operator.

"Why, let me see!" returned the wife of the young

renegade. "He left about an hour ago, and in something of a hurry. . . . Yes, Mr. Mark Nordhoff *did* call him up."

Roxana inquired whether Mrs. Nordhoff didn't think that the call had something to do with politics.

"Seems to me you have a good many questions this morning," the wife evaded, somewhat testily.

"Excuse me, Mrs. Nordhoff," apologized the impersonator. "You see, neither of them has showed up here this morning. The secretary is waiting, and asked me to do the hunt act. They've always got me combing the wire for some Mr. Hard-to-find. If you knew how difficult my job is, Mrs. Nordhoff, you'd excuse me for becoming a human question mark. It's no cinch, believe me!"

"That's all right!" Mrs. Nordhoff was evidently mollified. "I'm a bit upset to-day — my nerves seem all on edge."

Whereupon Miss Frisbee ventured a query even more pointed. "Hello! Hello-o there! Say, Mrs. Nordhoff, before you hang up — you ain't got an idea where I might find your vanishing relatives by aid of the wire, have you, now?"

That the wife had no suspicion of not being in conversation with the regular telephone girl at the party headquarters became evident when she suggested that the brothers might be found at their club. With the profuse thanks that rule when the professional "lady" of the wire is answered civilly by a "perfect lady" of the household, Roxana disconnected, exultant in the thought that Julian, as usual, had been right in his forecast. She now believed that, just as the lawyer had predicted, the boss had seen the light of his mistake,

and had sent for Cliff to persuade him to "go while the going was good."

"Well, the going won't be as good as it seems on the surface, Mark Nordhoff," she mused as she asked the real "central" for the number of the club at which the leaders of the organization party frequently gathered for pleasure or profit.

This time she attempted an impersonation of Mrs. Mark Nordhoff, mimicking to a nicety the dulcet tones of the overstout wife of the boss, which a deep-rooted hostility had moved her to study and imitate in the past. So successful was she that the clerk of the club seemed at once to recognize the voice.

Yes, indeed, Mr. Nordhoff was at the club! But he was closeted in one of the conference rooms and had left orders that he was not to be interrupted, no matter who called. The clerk was obsequiously certain that he would not mind being disturbed for Mrs. Nordhoff, but wouldn't she let him follow orders just this once and call later or leave some word?

"It's of no real importance," Miss Frisbee cooed in return. "My message can wait until I see him."

A third time she used the telephone, calling a garage of the neighborhood at which she had an account. This time she used the mezzo register of her own voice, asking that a limousine car be sent to her at once, one equipped for a rush trip into the country which she might find it necessary to make.

Then, with the speed of one practiced in preparing for sudden changes of habitat, she packed into her suit case an outfit which might, in an emergency, carry her through a couple of weeks.

So it came about that the hour of noon found Miss

Roxana Frisbee lounging comfortably in the shadow of a closely hooded automobile which stood at the curb just one door above the club of which Boss Nordhoff was the leading spirit. The particular number before which she had ordered a halt was the establishment of one Mme. Dochet, modiste of fashion, so that the presence of the commodious car attracted no particular attention.

The gaze of the young woman within hovered about a certain large gray machine, anchored directly ahead, one easily recognizable to her as the invariable conveyance of Mark Nordhoff. Too often had she noticed it, even to the number on its tail board, when the political leader had driven past her on Fifth Avenue or in Central Park, with his well-groomed, complacent wife at his side. As so far no alarm had been sent out for Cliff Nordhoff, Roxana deducted that this vehicle in all probability would be used to start the "get-away." In her hired limousine she proposed to shadow it.

Confirmation of the shrewdness of her conclusions came shortly after one o'clock when the boss hurried out of the club with one of his district leaders. Both men sprang into the gray car, leaving the door open. A moment later, possibly after a signal which she was unable to observe, a third man hastened down the steps and leaped in after them. Despite the envelopment of a great-coat with up-turned collar, and a slouch hat with screening brim, Roxana felt certain that this last was Clifford Nordhoff.

"Follow that car, the gray one," was the order she gave through the speaking tube. The chase was on.

There ensued a straight drive and a rapid one through a cross street toward the Hudson. At Tenth

Avenue the machine ahead turned south and at Twenty-third Street west again.

"The ferry!" exulted the fair pursuer. "Plus a railroad ticket to — the Lord knows where!"

There was much of encouragement in the fact that the party she followed did not seem in the least suspicious. They were doubtless relying on the fact that there had not yet been time for the district attorney to get his slow-moving grand jury into action. As Roxana well knew, a week might elapse before the act of the coroner in freeing Cliff would be vacated. Otherwise the Nordhoff party scarcely would have driven direct to the ferry.

Arrived there, the gray car stopped momentarily, and two of its passengers alighted — the district leader and the man she felt certain was the younger Nordhoff. She chuckled with real enjoyment on noting that the latter had "grown" a heavy black mustache on the short run from the club.

As she left her car, the Nordhoff machine whirled away with the boss, while the two who had emerged from it hurried into the ferry house. She reached the door just in time to see the figure in the great-coat passing through the gates to the boat. Her ears brought quick relief from her momentary panic when she caught the words of the district leader in the line at the ticket window.

"Lakewood — one way," said he as he flung down a bill.

"Lakewood — and return," she murmured to the agent. "I'll risk the chase ending there," was the thought that had induced her variation.

On the brief ride across the river, she made no effort

to trail her quarry, but kept to the ladies' cabin. At the terminal on the New Jersey side she hastened with the other passengers into the shed. Not until the train was underway did she go forward to the water cooler and venture a peep across the platforms into the smoking car. Her heart gave a small thump of satisfaction when she discerned a certain slouch hat on the head of a certain mustached passenger.

"This is certainly your lucky day, Roxy-girl," she commented as she returned to her seat. "Now, if that district attorney will only get busy!"

As the train slowed up for Lakewood she played the rôle of the nervous woman who is afraid of being carried past her station. So perfect was she in the part that even the brakeman caught the contagion and helped her to reach the platform as soon as any male passenger, one of the first of whom to alight was her man in the great-coat.

To her dismay, however, he went directly to the one automobile in waiting, spoke an imperative word to the chauffeur, got in beside him, and was whirled away. The only opportunity on wheels left to Roxana was a decrepit-looking village hack, against the shaves of which a rib-showing, white horse dozed. She realized the folly of attempting to follow in such a speedless wagon and for the moment experienced a sinking of heart.

But a suddenly resurrected memory of the garrulity of country hack drivers sustained her and she negotiated with the lone Jehu for a tour of the resort in the pines, that she might look over its hotels and boarding houses.

After a preliminary "Gid-up, Bones!" to his steed,

the old man launched into a discourse on Lakewood, past, present and future, with side excursions into the personal history of the owners of the "cottages" they passed generously thrown in. It was no conversational strain at all to remind him of the automobile which had darted away with the single passenger.

"That there auto is a joke," said the old fellow, with a cackling sort of laugh. "It's from Kokomos Farm."

He waited hopefully for her to show appreciation.

"Kokomos Farm," he repeated. "That's a horse farm — place where they raise blooded stock."

Again he paused for a sign.

"Women don't ever see jokes," he grumbled at last. "An auto from a horse farm! It's always seemed like a gasoline horse laugh to me."

Really appreciating his efforts at entertainment, Roxana paid him the tribute of a laugh. "And the man in the storm-coat who got off the train?" she prodded. "Who was he?"

"Takes you little women to keep an eye peeled for the big men, don't it, though?" the driver observed astutely. "Well, he *was* a trim looker! Some mustache, eh? I was talking to the Kokomos chauffeur about him just 'fore the train slowed in. He's the new trainer, by name, Stevenson, and said to be just over from Scotland."

"Who owns Kokomos Farm?"

"Mort Lewis, ma'am. He's some frog in the political puddle up to the big town."

Once more Roxana Frisbee felt entirely satisfied with herself. She had learned all she needed to know for present purposes. The alacrity with which she decided to stop at the Lakewood House might have surprised

the aged driver, had he not remembered opportunely the kindred vagaries of woman and horses. Her own musing was concerned chiefly with the realization that she need not remain at the resort to work out even the pretense of a bona-fide rest cure.

CHAPTER VII

THE WEAKEST LINK

AT organization headquarters none of the regulars was anxious to carry to Mark Nordhoff the news which had filtered from the district attorney's office into the marble halls of the Criminal Courts Building and been carried thence by trusted messenger. The boss was prone to flashes of anger when his desires were crossed, and not always scrupulous that the flashes should strike the person who actually did the crossing. Those who brought him bad tidings were certain to be in temporary disfavor, and often caught the first flare of the family temper; so it was not unnatural that those in the outer room tried to shift the responsibility.

The leader was shut in his private office in conference with two of his most trusted aides and the attorney who handled certain delicate legal matters of the party. The news which had come by underground from the huge brick pile on Centre Street that held the county's machinery of punishment was most important, and certainly had bearing on the conference then underway.

As was generally the case, when the message was particularly disagreeable, the task was finally saddled upon the venerable secretary who had seen bosses come and bosses go and was considered case-hardened to their ire. But even he gave the others an accusing look to-day, as he rapped gently on the inner door, then slipped into the private room.

"Just had word from down town, Chief," he said, his wrinkled face a mask.

"Out with it, Murray!" Nordhoff spoke with a mildness that was as gratifying to the secretary as it was unexpected. "What does the rascally D. A. hand us?"

"It couldn't be worse," muttered old Murray. "They've indicted him — murder in the first degree."

Boss Nordhoff settled back in his chair with a heavy sigh, but the looked-for outburst did not come, although perhaps never had he received worse news.

"No more than I expected," he muttered at last. "It's the price we pay for letting the other party get a single office. What was it that some knowing gazabo said about a chain not being stronger than its weakest link? Well, an opposition district attorney is our weakest link in a cable of this sort."

"Cheer up, Mark," advised Sam Kaplan, the organization attorney. "He won't find the trial jury the cinch he did the true-bill crew."

"Trial jury?" demanded Nordhoff with something like a snarl. "He can't try my brother until he arrests him, and he can't arrest him until his sleuths get their hands on him. Glory be that we got him away in time, and without suspicion! That little shrimp down at the Criminal Courts can whistle till he's black in the face, but he won't find Cliff."

Thanking his own special constellations that he had so miraculously escaped an explosion, the old secretary slipped out again.

"I suppose it was wise to have him drop out of sight," observed Kaplan, as the door closed, but his voice lacked the ring the boss would have liked to hear.

"It certainly was, if he can keep under cover for a year or two. But if they catch him —"

Mark Nordhoff's laugh was assured. "They'll never land the youngster. We were too quick for them. They won't be able to pick up the trail until we elect a new D. A."

"But if they do catch him, it will make his defense that much more difficult," the man of law continued. "It will put him in the position of having fled from justice. Juries don't like that."

Again there came interruption from the outside. A long-distance telephone call demanded the boss. Murray was instructed to make the connection, and Nordhoff took off his desk receiver. The next moment, his confrères heard a hoarse exclamation. The face of the leader went white, then flashed an angry red. With his free hand he clutched the desk edge. His nails marred the polish of the mahogany. "I'll call you later," they finally heard him say, as he slammed up the receiver and sat staring around their circle.

"Not more bad news, Mark?" asked Mort Lewis, the rotund owner of Kokomos Farm.

"Worst possible," was the answer, in the voice of a man who has suffered a body blow. "They've just arrested Cliff down at your damned farm, the place you were boasting was as secure as Timbuktu, your sure refuge in time of storm. I wonder if — if there's a traitor in this camp!"

Nordhoff passed his threatening look from face to face among his advisers — the only three besides himself who were supposed to share the secret of Clifford's whereabouts.

Lewis, owner of the place selected for the retirement,

was the first to speak, perhaps because he considered himself beyond suspicion, as he played politics, not for revenue, but for the fun he got out of it.

"Clean your mind of the idea that anybody's been double-crossing you," he advised. "You know us too well for anything like that. The district attorney must have been a bit keener than we figured, that's all. Probably trailed us the day of Cliff's get-away, and then this morning discounted grand jury action by wire."

"Well, they haven't got him in the Tombs yet," muttered the boss, deep in thought. "And they can't bring him out of Jersey unless the governor of New York State asks for it. Lewis, you hustle up to Albany and tell the governor that I said he was to refuse requisition papers."

"That won't do, Mark," inserted Kaplan hastily.

"The governor will do what I tell him or I'll know the reason why," roared the boss. "Didn't I make him?"

"I wasn't thinking of the governor's obedience," began the organization attorney. "He'll probably do anything you demand. It's the scheme of fighting extradition that's at fault. The idea is on a par with that snap verdict of the coroner. We've got to work out a regular jury acquittal for Cliff. The public won't be satisfied with anything else."

"But it's murder in the first degree they've indicted him for! If they bring him back here, they'll throw him into the Tombs without bail." Nordhoff's tone was one of violent protest.

"Surely," agreed Kaplan. "But you're forgetting that murder isn't murder until you're convicted. The Tombs won't be comfortable for Cliff nor pleasing for

you, but it's the only possible thing in this case. You might as well gulp it down like a dose of bad medicine."

"I don't take medicine from —"

"Forget it!" The impatience of Kaplan was flagrant. "Once you get a real 'not guilty' verdict, Cliff is forever free and your political bacon is saved. Suppose you fight extradition and get away with it for the present? This dinky murder case will then become a campaign issue, and like as not the opposition will elect the next governor. Then how long do you suppose it will be before they drag your brother back into the State? You ought to know there's no statute of limitations on—well, on killing a man. No jury would ever acquit him after a fight like that. No, sir, you take it from me, get word to Cliff that he's to waive extradition and let them bring him back here—the sooner the better!"

Still the boss insisted that the governor ought to do something in the emergency. He reminded his associates that as yet he had asked practically nothing from the man whom he had raised from comparative obscurity to the highest office in the State government.

"We'll have plenty of use for the governor, Mark," continued Lawyer Kaplan more persuasively. "As a last resort you may want a pardon, but long before that we need a friendly judge on the bench when Cliff's case comes to trial. I have in mind the very man. He is Van der Water, of Troy. A little entertaining of the proper sort will incline him to our side of every point of law that comes up, from the challenging of the talesmen to the final charging of the jury."

Mort Lewis evidently thought that Kaplan was suggesting a change of venue, by which the case would be

transferred to another county, for he shook his head in decided objection and declared that, according to his view, the case should be kept in the county where the Nordhoff influence was most far-reaching.

But Kaplan had no such idea in mind, as he speedily protested with some heat. He would have the governor send Judge Van der Water into the New York judicial district to help on congested court conditions. The up-State salary was small and he was sure the judge would appreciate being paid at the New York County rate of seventeen thousand five hundred dollars a year. They could arrange that the judges of the Appellate Division assign Van der Water to the criminal branch, and there would be no difficulty in having Cliff's case detailed to his "Part."

"I tell you it's the only way," he concluded. "Send the word, Mark!"

After offering several variations of the protest that he did not want a brother of his locked up in the Tombs, the boss was finally made to see the folly of fighting extradition. The result of the conference was that Mort Lewis hastened to Lakewood with word that made matters unexpectedly easy for the district attorney's detectives who had secured the arrest through Lakewood authorities. The prisoner himself grumbled at the step, having no relish for a long siege in the city prison. But he came to realize the gravity of his position and finally signed the waiver.

"How did you fellows manage to land me so quickly?" was the crux of his most persistent question on the short train trip back to New York. "I'm sure I wasn't followed, and not a soul in or around Lakewood knew me."

"The D. A. seemed to know all about you and your movements," said one of the officers, who was not adverse to doing a friendly turn for one so closely related to the chief of the organization party. "He said you had taken the name of Stevenson, and that we'd find you playing horse trainer at Kokomos. And there you sure were!"

"Don't it beat the Dutch?" muttered Cliff. "Somebody must have snitched. If Mark ever finds out who — Well, I'd rather be in my boots than the traitor's!"

"I got an idea from something I heard down at the building that it was a woman who put you across," volunteered the county detective.

But the younger Nordhoff shook his head. "In my case there couldn't be a woman. That's one suit I draw clean. I married the only girl, and I'd be a worse man than I am if I ever suspected that she wasn't true blue."

As the train approached the terminal, the prisoner's nervousness increased. Repeatedly he demanded assurance from his brother's messenger that the big boss himself would meet them at the station. Once he asked petulantly if there wasn't some chance of finding a judge who would let him out on bail. "Mark could raise a million, if necessary," he added.

"Ten million wouldn't help you," consoled the county detective. "You're up against murder in the first, man!"

"It's not murder in the first or any other number when you get down to cases," Cliff protested. "It wasn't murder at all, but just self-defense, as the coroner said. I'm being persecuted because my brother has a seat among the mighty."

"Well, I hope you beat it, son," was the detective's somewhat lugubrious return.

The meeting between the brothers in the train-shed at the terminal was outwardly quite matter-of-fact; both restrained their emotions. But there was something in the hand-clasp of the elder that brought back courage to the one on whom the law had laid its clutch.

"Keep up your nerve, youngster," said the boss. "We'll free you for good this time."

"Who do you suppose gave me up, Mark?" Cliff's query came in an aggrieved tone.

"Haven't had a chance to find out yet, but when I do—" Mark Nordhoff finished with a gesture that was expressive.

"Suppose I'll have to go to the Tombs?" There was in Clifford's expression a remnant of hope that his brother's pull might yet save him that ordeal.

The boss frowned. "There seems to be no other way. But the commissioner will make things easy for you. You can have all your meals sent in and many other privileges. Just as soon as I get the lines laid, we'll rush your trial, so don't be impatient."

"What lines, Mark?"

"Enough to leave no chances of — But this is no place to talk about it."

"It's a pity you broke with Randolph by keeping him out of the club," observed the younger.

"Julian Randolph?" The boss sniffed. "We wouldn't want that shyster, in any event."

"Shyster or not, he gets them off," murmured Cliff.

"I'll go to the mat for you with something stronger than a tricky lawyer, don't ever worry."

Together the brothers followed the county detective into the waiting automobile, the Nordhoff car of gray; for it was important that even the drive to the city prison should be made in state.

CHAPTER VIII

THE JUDGE FROM UP-STATE

THE distinction of an assignment to temporary service in the New York judicial district came to Judge Kenneth Van der Water as an utter surprise. That the governor should select him from the host of up-State officials to relieve the pressure on the courts of the metropolis was utterly beyond the most sanguine dreams of his past; for his administration of the Troy court had been under severe criticism almost from the beginning of his term. The conviviality of his personal conduct had been the subject of attack; also, his record for reversals by the higher courts was assailable, and, in certain moments of temperate reflection, had caused him considerable mental anguish. Indeed, so precarious had seemed his seat on the bench that he had speculated lately on the possibility of the legislature impeaching him at the behest of his political enemies.

And, in the face of all this, the governor of the State had chosen him for service in the most important judicial district!

Several times Van der Water forced himself to look at the authoritative communication from Albany before he could believe in the reality of his good fortune. Yet, there it was in black and white; there was no mistaking the executive's signature.

Dazed, he folded the document, placed it in his inner coat pocket, and prepared to leave his chambers. One thought had taken prominent form in the chaos of his joy. There was a certain person in his life who surely had the right to know of this honor which had come to him before he published the good news to his native town.

A new spring lightened his step as he left the court house and turned into the shaded street that contained his home. One of the charges whispered against him was that he had often staggered along this same street, a report in which there was enough of truth to shame him inwardly now; but he held his head erect and looked at those who passed, whether friend or foe, with challenging directness.

At his own gate he turned in and opened the front door; he tip-toed down the hall, then, even more softly, stepped onto a glass-enclosed porch where sat a small white-haired woman, her back toward him, rocking as she sewed.

"She'll be so pleased," he whispered to himself, "and so surprised!"

For a moment he watched her with the admiring eyes of a love that could never grow old because of the constant rejuvenation of its tenderness. Approaching the chair, he dropped the envelope with his appointment over her shoulder and into her lap.

"Kenneth!" she cried. "Will you never cease trying to surprise me?"

"Read the letter, Martha, if you want a real surprise. It is from the governor."

"There is no trouble?" she began, but one glance at his face made it unnecessary to await his answer.

After studying the commission of appointment, she again looked up at him, incredulity in every wrinkle of her worry-lined face. Then she read it more thoroughly.

"Does this mean that he has *really chosen you?*"

At her husband's steady smile, her eyes welled with tears and she gazed away from him, out into the winter ruin of her garden.

"It certainly is nothing to cry about," he declared. "This going to the New York County bench will silence a lot of busy tongues around Troy."

She arose and on the necessary toe-tips planted a wifely kiss upon his cheek.

"I am very glad, dear," she murmured. "It is your opportunity at last. It surely is your opportunity, if —"

Stepping back, she studied him with a grave, but wholly kind scrutiny.

"There are no ifs about it, Martha. It ~~is~~ my opportunity!"

"There are no ifs about it," she persisted, "*if* you can control your — your love of companionship, and the things that go with it. New York is so big and so rich and so wicked, I — I'm almost afraid."

"I have thought that all out already," he admitted, sitting down opposite her. "That is why you are coming to New York with me, little woman, to remain as long as I'm needed there on the bench. I reckon that with the fair Martha along, I can keep on the straight path, narrow though it be."

"Kenneth, do you mean it?" she exclaimed, her face lighting. "Will you try hard this time? Am I really to go with you?"

"We'll live in a hotel," he planned.

At once her rural instincts protested. "But that's dreadfully expensive."

"So is the salary they pay in New York County. Seventeen thousand five hundred dollars a year is the rate. Think of it!"

Again the wife's face clouded. "But, Kenneth, what shall we do with the house here in Troy?"

"Your careless old husband needs a guardian in Gotham more than the old home in Troy needs a guard," he returned, with a laugh at her earnestness over the trifle. "Say that you'll come along, like a good girl, to keep me in the line of sworn duty. It is time I showed this State that I'm fit to be a judge."

"And we *will* show them!" Suddenly drawing up her slight figure, the wife tapped the porch floor with a tiny, determined foot.

"We will, we surely will!" he affirmed in a sober voice.

So youthful and so pretty grew Martha's face within its aureole of prematurely white hair, under the stimulant of hope, that the husband repeated the vow many times afterward to himself. "We will! We absolutely will!"

Thus it came about that in a couple of weeks Judge and Mrs. Kenneth Van der Water bade their up-State home a temporary good-by, and took train for the metropolis. When they were comfortably installed in a reasonably-priced family hotel, which Martha protested was far too luxurious, the Judge reported his presence and readiness to serve to the judges of the Appellate Division. He was duly assigned to a "Part" of the Criminal Branch, and, equally according to the pro-

gram of which he knew nothing, drew, among other cases, that of the State vs. Clifford Nordhoff.

Up to this point there had not been a single hitch in the plan which Boss Nordhoff and his advisers had worked out for the saving of the rash younger brother, and, with him, the political supremacy of the boss himself. And it was with confidence, based on reports of Van der Water's notorious past behavior, that the party powers set about winning over their importation to the cause.

As soon as his address was learned, cards to the Organization and other clubs were tendered him. When he did not take advantage of the hospitality thus extended, as country judges in city service are usually eager to do, the invitations were made more personal and specific.

Once or twice he did go to luncheon, but, to the disappointment of his designing hosts, turned his wineglass upside down. All dinners, theater parties and automobile trips after court hours he religiously declined, excusing himself on the ground of necessary work on important cases or on that of a previous engagement with Mrs. Van der Water.

After ten blank days of attempt to lure the stranger into social activity, the boss called a council of war at headquarters.

"Things are not going right," he announced. "Thought you fellows said that the old bench buck from Troy was convivial? He's as dry as Sahara and as offish as an old maid."

"It's queer, for he has the reputation of hitting the high places," declared Attorney Kaplan. "I could cite you several big up-State cases where Van der Water's

support was won by judicious entertaining. He has nearly found the carpet before the legislature several times for celebrating too enthusiastically."

"And down here he won't even sip champagne at luncheon!" snorted Nordhoff. "I've had several of the party's judges after him, but none was able to break through the ice."

"The trouble is that he's got his wife along," offered Mort Lewis, who claimed to know the recalcitrant appointee intimately. "I imagine the poor woman has had enough of his foolishness and has found some way of keeping him straight on this junket."

"Then we've got to go after him rough-shod," declared Nordhoff. "Will money do any good?"

"Van der Water doesn't know the value of a dollar," laughed Lewis. "I don't know a man who would dare offer him an open bribe."

"But he is in politics," suggested Kaplan. "He comes up for re-election next year."

The decision of the boss was instant. "There is our opening!" he cried. "Go see him, Mort, and tell him there isn't a chance of him getting back on the bench unless he does the right thing in this case. Put it up to him strong."

Mort Lewis obeyed orders like a good soldier of the organization, but he never afterward told all that happened at the interview with Van der Water of Troy. Unfortunately he selected the family hotel for the conference, where the sweet influence of Martha was much in evidence. He departed from their two-room suite not long after he entered — and he departed hurriedly.

"Nothing doing!" was his succinct report on return to his chief.

"There's got to be something doing!" returned Nordhoff, his face flushing. "Do you think I'm going to let any two-for-a-quarter up-State judge jam my brother?"

"You're welcome to take a try at the boob yourself," returned Lewis, still ruffled. "I don't want any more of it."

"What did he say?" asked Kaplan, who prided himself on never becoming aroused.

"He said that Cliff would be treated with absolute fairness; that he would receive exact justice."

"Surely you told him that would not be enough? That's not what we want!" snapped Nordhoff. "What do we care for exact justice? We can get that anywhere."

"I put the situation to him straight," continued Lewis, with a grimace, "so straight, in fact, that I was thrown out. I tell you old Van der Water has decided to reform. He's come down here to make a new record for himself, and he's brought the wife along to see that he doesn't change his mind."

Silence pervaded the private room at the club in which this nocturnal conference was being held. Boss Nordhoff looked from face to face, around the circle of his intimate advisers, but found no light in any one of them. Slowly the blood mounted higher on his own florid countenance and he breathed with difficulty. The advisers straightened in their chairs to receive the outburst thus signaled.

"You're all ready to quit, aren't you?" burst at last from the lips of the leader. His intake of breath had an angry, hissing sound. "You're a fine, white-livered bunch! You're willing to sacrifice my brother, who

wouldn't have been in this miserable mess if it weren't for your infernal politics, aren't you? I tell you, something must be done! I'm going to get Cliff out of this, if it tears the organization to ribbons!"

"We're ready for anything that seems —" began Kaplan.

"Then clear out — all of you!" interrupted the irate politician. "I'll handle the rest of it myself. Go!"

Silently and, it must be confessed, rather gratefully they left the room.

CHAPTER IX

THE LAST CHANCE

AS the door closed behind the last of his aides, the boss dropped his head into the huge arms stretched before him on the table. A sob that was half a snarl rasped his lips.

"Oh, Cliff, Cliff!" he groaned. "Why did I ever drag you into this treadmill? I might have known it would break you. You could never be anything but a rash boy — just my little brother — my kid brother!"

Unexampled as was the strong man's access of weakness, it soon passed, leaving him again the dominant, imperious Nordhoff, the master of his party. That he was still the master was the thought that upheld him. With it came the determination to crack his whip as he had never cracked it before. He fell to urgent planning.

One of his handmade creatures of the bench must step forward and save his brother. Mentally he reviewed the list. Those most recently elected he discarded as being, through the long terms of office ahead of them, beyond his influence in so desperate a matter. One was free because of his strangle-hold on a certain element of the foreign vote. Another was too closely intrenched with the corporations who supplied the party war chest at election time. A third of the short-termed had so large a private fortune that it was doubtful whether he would care for a reelection.

But there was Northmore! Yes, there was Northmore, who owed him everything; Northmore, to whom his place on the bench was the most important thing in life; Northmore, who must shortly stand for reelection, and who had nothing on which to fall back in case he lost the nomination. Northmore was his man!

Impatiently the boss rang for a club messenger. By the time the uniformed boy responded, he had banished every trace of emotion from his face.

"See if Judge Northmore is about the club," he ordered. "If he is, tell him quietly that I'd like him to come up here."

Arising, he paced the thickly carpeted floor while he waited.

Vehemently and repeatedly he assured himself that Northmore would not fail him in this emergency, and wondered why he had not thought of the man in the first place. It was a foolish thing to have depended on winning over an up-State judge. They could easily have the case transferred on some pretext, when Northmore had come to the scratch! The judge had always been faithful in the party's service, and what was this saving of Cliff, if not an act for the party's good? If Northmore did not agree with him, then it would be the worse for Northmore, that was all!

"You wanted to see me, Mark?" A thin voice sounded through the opening crack of the door.

The boss turned and, with a smile of genuine gladness, welcomed the bald-headed and somber-faced jurist who stood on the threshold.

"Come in, Northmore, and close the door," he cried. "I want to talk over several things with you, the next election, among others."

"I hope I've earned a place on the ticket." In the voice of the visitor was an acute note of anxiety. "I've tried to be a good judge for the people."

"And for the party," added the autocrat with another smile.

"Indeed, I have served the party when it came to the pinch."

"And you are ready to do it again?" The strength of the leader's hope kept doubt out of his query.

"I am ready, if the service doesn't require the violation of my oath of office," was the prompt answer.

"Then you're the man I want to try my brother," stated the boss with that decision of manner which had so often carried points without opposing discussion. "You're the very man!"

"Try your brother?" Judge Northmore sank into a chair. "But, Mark, he must be tried for murder, and I don't like murder trials!"

"You would like reëlection," inserted the boss significantly.

"I thought it was all settled that Cliff's case was to go before Van der Water, of Troy," stammered the jurist.

"Then think again. They had the wrong dope on Van der Water. He didn't come across with anything better than exact justice, and the jury that tries Cliff has got to have a stronger dose than that to bring in a verdict to suit me."

"But, Mark, I can't try your brother," protested Northmore. "Think of the scandal of it! Everybody knows that you put me on the bench. It would ruin me with the bar association. I might as well quit."

"It will ruin you with the party, if you dodge the

party's service, Northmore. You can take that straight from my shoulder."

"There is a limit, Marcus, to what a judge can do for his party." Northmore spoke slowly. "Even you wouldn't be able to put me back on the bench if I tried that case."

"So you are like the rest of them?" The tones of the boss crackled with scorn. "Not ready to come up to scratch when it's a case of life or death, though the only penalty for you is a flare of public opinion! I'll pledge you anything you name that if you preside over a trial that brings Cliff's acquittal, you'll go back on the bench for a full term."

If Judge Northmore's own life had depended upon it he could not have argued more earnestly than he did in the next few minutes before the man who held his judicial future. He laid stress upon the emptiness of an acquittal verdict obtained before a judge whom the public was certain to consider partial. Such a verdict, he held, would be as bad as the snap judgment which the coroner had taken immediately after the primary-day trouble. The opposition press, Northmore was sure, would make the most of such a situation — quite enough to dethrone Marcus Nordhoff as head of the organization and to pull their whole political thatch down upon them.

"You're not going about it right, Mark," he implored. "What you want is an out-and-out acquittal, not a tainted one. Go after the jury and don't give a damn who the judge is!"

"But there is danger in that," protested the boss, upon whom, however, the creature's words had made obvious impression. "You can never tell about juries

unless they are absolutely instructed by the court. Suppose, now, that this twelve brought in a verdict of guilty? Where would poor Cliff be, then?"

"Get the right lawyer, Mark. I know one who can save Cliff, no matter who is on the bench, or how stiff the case is against him," Northmore continued with honest vehemence. "He's about the only man in New York I'd trust the job to. He's never lost a forlorn-hope case in my remembrance, and, begging your pardon, this fix of Cliff's looks just that — a forlorn hope."

"So I'm advised by you to trust my only brother's life to a lawyer," muttered Nordhoff, "just like any ordinary Tom, Dick, or Harry? After all I've done for the judges of this county, too!"

"But *such* a lawyer!" exclaimed the little man, with desperate earnestness. "He'll bring the boy out with flying colors, if you can get him to take the case."

"If I can get him to take the case!" cried the politician. "For the love of God, is there no end to the 'ifs' in this matter? Why *can't* I get him, if I want him, I'd like to know?"

"I think you can, if you'll pay his fee." The judge breathed easily for the first time since he had entered the room. "But Julian Randolph is a queer customer sometimes."

"Julian Randolph — the man Cliff himself spoke of!" The boss spoke almost superstitiously, then added with scorn: "You don't think I'd trust my brother's life to that legal safe-breaker, do you?"

"Randolph is the man to save Cliff, if he will take the case," returned Northmore stoutly. "I'd lose no time clamping a retainer on him and giving him full charge. Let the case come before Van der Water as

scheduled, or even one of the opposition party judges. Randolph will get you a real acquittal. Why, man, he'll make you proud that Cliff's your brother!"

"I'll always be that, judge." The boss smiled wearily. "He's a Nordhoff, and, come what may, we never go back on our kin."

For a moment his head was bent under the weight of his meditation. His brother's life, the family reputation, his own position of command, all probably rested on his present decision. He weighed every atom of Northmore's argument against his own opinion, and realized that the jurist's view was gradually overbalancing.

"You've always been a shrewd little customer, Northmore, and I believe you are a good friend of mine," he observed at last. "Wonder where I'll run across Julian Randolph to-night?"

CHAPTER X

THE PERJURY MILL

THE first person to reach the office of Randolph & Comsky this particular morning was a gentleman rich from his own nimble wits, familiarly known as "Million" Mulligan. His more than timeliness, at an hour before either of the partners had appeared, was not surprising in consideration of the fact that it was Mr. Mulligan's own defense which was scheduled for rehearsal. He had driven a pair of big gamblers into a corner a few weeks before, and had overstepped himself a trifle in his subsequent demands. They had countered by going to the public prosecutor, despite the pollution of their own hands, and had secured his indictment on the charge of extortion.

Million Mulligan had never been in Sing Sing, even as a visitor, and he had no intention of going this time. He felt that his bank accounts were too heavy and his earning power when at liberty too certain to justify the suggested vacation in a striped costume. Accordingly he had come to Randolph, and had handed over a royal fee, with the request that he be acquitted of the charge.

To his lawyer he had confided truthfully every detail of the transaction which the grand jury had unhesitatingly stamped as criminal. His guilt in the face of the facts was indubitable. Even Mulligan's skill as an extortionist had provided no advance defense, although

the constitutional caution that was the result of his long experience had made his crime difficult of proof.

He had not finished his initial recital of the facts before Randolph had decided that a successful defense would require manufactured evidence. He would pin down the gamblers to a definite statement of the time and place of the crime, then provide witnesses from his expert staff to prove absolutely that the worthy Mulligan had been somewhere else, and therefore could not possibly have extorted a penny from the gentleman of chance. So the testimony desired from the several pawns had been duly worked out, typewritten, and sent to them to memorize. And for this morning, two days before Mulligan's trial, the attorney had called a dress rehearsal.

The rich expert in criminal graft was shown into the private office, where he sat down for a last study of the lines he was to recite when he took the witness stand in his own defense. He was as nervous as a young actor and the typewritten sheets of his "part" were frayed from overhandling. Determinedly he would hide them away in an inner pocket of his perfectly tailored coat and start his recitation, only to strike a snag of memory and draw them forth again for a prompting glance.

He was thus engaged when the chief clerk ushered in Mr. and Mrs. Everett Ralston, a couple whose manifest respectability impressed itself on Mulligan after one glance at their careful grooming, and notice of the ease of manner with which they accepted introduction. Mr. Ralston, it transpired, had a real-estate office and a business reputation that left no loophole of attack, mayhap because his business was so small. Mrs. Ralston

was a bona-fide Southerner, and could call a long line of ancestors to her defense if her credentials were questioned. She spoke with a delightful accent, and was dressed with the style of a society matron of means. Mulligan was pleased that Randolph had been able to enlist such impressive-looking persons for the cast of his drama for liberty.

A fourth arrival was a chauffeur in uniform — John Fee, by name, known along Broadway as "Gasoline John." Mr. Fee actually drove a taxicab, for which he was duly licensed, and he had a fairly clear record with the police.

"Snap" Comsky, the junior partner, sauntered in on the heels of the driver, puffing a black cigar which he neglected to remove when he spoke to Mrs. Ralston.

"The truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth," he said, with a chuckle, by way of general greeting. "I'm glad to see that you pupils are all on time. Teacher will be along in a minute."

Even as he spoke, Julian Randolph's large person loomed in the doorway, his face glowing with the exercise of the morning walk which he was never too rushed to allow himself. His first greeting was for Mrs. Ralston, and could not have been more gracious had she been a real society queen instead of a mere hireling for the shady issues of his business. With kindly solicitude he inquired how her luck had been running at auction bridge, more kindly, perhaps, because he realized that, were it not for this game and her other expensive follies, the attractive matron would not have been so conveniently at his beck and call.

He shook hands more formally with Ralston, and saluted the chauffeur with a hearty: "Hello, Gasoline!

I trust you are as unlike your name as usual this morning?"

As client, the man who paid the bills, Million Mulligan came in for a friendly slap on the back. "Shorten up that long face of yours, old fellow," advised Julian. "I can almost hear the foreman of our jury saying 'Not guilty!' Sounds good, eh? Mind if I smoke a cigar, Mrs. Ralston?"

Courteously awaiting her acquiescence, he ensconced himself behind his desk.

"I'm a regular smoke eater, Mr. Randolph," she volunteered, with a smile for these justly famed "manners" of her employer.

For a few minutes the lawyer busied himself with his mail; his witness pupils waited in silence. His mind, however, was not upon the letter in hand. A pervasive distaste for the work of the morning had come to him during his walk down town, a visitation of uncomfortable frequency since the promise he had made to himself after that memorable meeting with Lora Nelson. Yet here he was about to reopen his perjury mill—hardly to be called a rung of his ladder to professional uprightness! He sought reassurance in the thought that he had taken on the Mulligan case before he had made himself any reformatory vows, and that, in justice to his client, he must see it through. He must find a way of declining such cases in the future.

Pushing back from his desk, he glanced around the office. A slight frown crossed his face, as he rang for the chief clerk. "Have you heard anything from Miss Frisbee?" he asked when that young man appeared at the door.

"Not a word since she went to the country, sir,"

"She knew we planned to rehearse this morning?"

The chief clerk nodded.

"Strange she isn't here, then! Miss Frisbee never fails us. I wonder —"

But at the moment there sounded a light footstep in the outer office and the petite brunette herself hurried in.

"Sorry I'm late, Julian," she exclaimed, looking into his eyes eagerly for the greeting she never failed to seek. "Taxi broke down."

"You should employ Gasoline, here. He's always dependable," returned Randolph pleasantly. "Did you enjoy your trip to the country?"

"There was just one thing lacking," she answered.

Randolph did not invite further particulars. In his half smile she fancied a shade of disapproval.

"Well, if you enjoyed yourself, you got what you went for," said he more impersonally. "You certainly look fit enough."

She focussed upon him an intrepid, even triumphant smile.

"Yes," she exclaimed with relish, "I got what I went for."

For a moment Julian studied the vehement manner of this pretty woman whom he knew so well, with that intentness which she had aroused in him the last time they had been together in the office. Then, as though giving up a difficult problem, he turned briskly to the others.

"Let us get down to business," he said, resuming his seat. "Is everybody up in the lines of this case?"

Million Mulligan alone looked dubious.

"If you don't take a grip on your stage fright, Mil-

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lion, I'll have to keep you off the stand," threatened the instructor with a laugh. "Just imagine that the twelve in the jury box are Dutchess County farmers and that you have a whole trunk full of green goods to sell."

After permitting his pupils a relaxing laugh, he suddenly grew serious, altogether professional.

"The one really important thing for each of you to remember is that we are dealing with the evening of Wednesday, January twenty-fifth, between the hours of six-thirty and midnight," he stated. "Each must have some definite way of fixing the date. By no possibility could the day have been Thursday or Tuesday.

"It snowed that particular afternoon and the storm turned to a sleety rain in the early evening. At six o'clock, our friend, the chauffeur, was hailed on Forty-second Street, near Broadway, by one Mr. Mulligan, whom he had driven many times before. This night he drove the gentleman to an apartment building on Fifty-eighth Street and waited five minutes while his fare went inside. Mulligan returned with a young woman, after which Fee drove the two to The Tagus on Central Park West. He returned for them at midnight, dropped the young woman at her apartment and took Mr. Mulligan to his hotel. Further than that Mr. Gasoline Fee knoweth not.

"Mrs. Ralston remembers this particular evening because it was her birthday — I am right in that, am I not? This particular Wednesday in January *was* your birthday?"

"Strange, but rather lucky, isn't it?" agreed the lady. "Of course we remember what we do on our birthdays."

"Yes. Mrs. Ralston gave a dinner party in her apartment at The Tagus for her dear friend, Miss Roxana Frisbee, on that night. The other guest was Mr. Mulligan. They came in about seven o'clock. After dinner they played bridge, Mulligan and Miss Frisbee losing some fifty dollars to the Ralstons."

"I wish they had," interrupted Ralston *soto voce*.

After a reproving frown, Julian continued: "You must not be able to recall the exact amount, Mrs. Ralston; you play bridge too often. The guests departed a few minutes after midnight.

"As for Mr. Ralston," continued the mentor in the same cogent tone, "he remembers the date because it was his wife's birthday. He will repeat her story, with a few inconsequential variations.

"Miss Frisbee recalls it accurately because it was the first time she was out with Mr. Mulligan, her fiancé, since —"

"With my *what?*" demanded the young woman, her eyes registering bona fide amazement.

"Oh, yes, I forgot, Roxana!" explained Randolph with a smile. "We've improved on your story since you went to the country. You're engaged to marry Mr. Mulligan, quite the dearest man in the world."

"Is that necessary?"

"Why do you look so scandalized? Am I such a bear as all that?" asked Mulligan, who, having been notoriously successful with women, did not relish in the least the frank distaste of this pretty girl's manner.

Roxana parried lightly: "Suppose you should take it into your head to sue me for breach of promise when I cast you off after the trial?"

Mulligan stared at her with bold admiration. "I might, at that!" he laughed.

"I'll guarantee that he won't; he's had trouble enough for a while," declared Randolph. "But if he is looking for more — that is, if he *does* sue you, we'll have this case reopened."

"Or if I do, it might be easier for the young lady just to marry me," inserted Mulligan, with characteristic persistence.

"Now, friends," urged Julian, rapping on his desk as a period to this persiflage, "Miss Frisbee left her apartment with Mr. Mulligan shortly before seven and was with him continuously until twelve-thirty. They dined, bridged, lost fifty, *et cetera*, at the Ralstons', as aforesaid.

"Mr. Mulligan enters denials, general and specific, of any extortion from the complainants on January twenty-fifth or any other day or evening. On that particular evening he was with his fiancée."

This time Roxana merely shrugged her shoulders and Julian smiled at her approvingly.

"He was with his fiancée," repeated the instructor with increased emphasis. "He dined with her quietly at the home of her friends and there played bridge until time to take her home. Afterwards our well-conducted gentleman went directly to the Knickerbocker and retired. What could be more innocent?"

Randolph glanced around the office, radiating confidence to each of the group in turn.

"There you have the simple little story of how Mr. Mulligan spent the evening of Wednesday, January twenty-fifth," he expanded, pride in his inventiveness banishing for the moment the last shadow of distaste

from his mind. "Nothing in that for any of you to get tangled on, is there? Still, we'll play safe and see what Mr. Comsky can do toward mixing you up. Have your wits about you, my truthsayers, for, when it comes to cross-examination, Snap should have a job in the district attorney's office."

One by one, Randolph called his witnesses to the mock stand as he was to do in all seriousness a few days later. He put his questions to them as he intended to do at the actual trial. In turn, he handed them over to his partner for grilling.

Morris Comsky had learned the name of the assistant district attorney who was to prosecute Mulligan and aped all of that official's mannerisms and methods. He smiled on the women witnesses, complimented them, and led them far away from the matter at hand, only to spring back suddenly upon some detail of testimony. He misquoted them, tried their patience, angered them at last.

With the men he was savage. He asked insinuating questions, endeavored to pry into their private lives, accused them of crimes, doubted their word — in short, bulldozed them to a degree that would scarcely be permitted in actual court. Snap's inquisition was the last word in preparedness for a false-swearing performance.

So skillful was the little Hebrew at this task of grinding the perjury mill that even Randolph's best-trained professional witnesses, such as Roxana Frisbee and Ralston, left the mock witness box with sighs of relief. He made it a real ordeal, so much harder than the actual testifying would be that they could go into court more than forearmed.

With Mulligan he was particularly severe, for that

worthy, as defendant, would have to bear the brunt of the prosecutor's attack. The grafter was no longer well groomed when Snap was through with him, though he had held to his story with a stoutness that greatly pleased his instructor. The agonies of cross-examination actually had wilted his collar, and the crease had vanished from the knees of his trousers, so frequently had he hitched them in trepidation.

Induced by his general look of suffering, Miss Frisbee's manner toward him grew more kind and she favored him with several friendly asides.

Julian was giving his client some final advice on his witness stand manner when the telephone on his desk rang sharply. None of the roomful was above listening to the one-sided conversation which followed his grasp of the receiver.

"Yes, this is Julian Randolph. . . . Why, how do you do, Mr. Nordhoff? . . . But I have clients waiting. . . . Can't very well put them off. . . . Of course, if it is as urgent as all that. . . . I like big cases, Nordhoff; they don't make them too big. . . . The Organization Club? All right. I'll travel along. . . . Good-by!"

Randolph threw a significant glance at his junior partner, then announced to the witness staff that the rehearsal was ended.

He made an appointment with Mulligan for the next day for a final review of the case and warned his experts to be on hand at the trial, handing them the formal subpoenas which lay on his desk, already prepared.

Calling Comsky to the window, he whispered to him earnestly for a minute and then left the room.

From the moment the lawyer had mentioned Nord-

hoff's name, Roxana Frisbee forgot her amenities with the wealthy Mulligan, and strained her ears to catch every word of the half conversation. Julian's sudden ending of the rehearsal and his evidently unexpected departure worried her. What could Mark Nordhoff want with him, she wondered? Had they by any possibility learned that it was she who had informed the district attorney of Cliff's hiding place? She did not believe that possible; but certainly she had excellent reasons otherwise for keeping these two men apart!

She could hear Julian in the outer office giving some necessary instructions to the clerk. Comsky stood by the window in an attitude of deep reflection. Mulligan and the other witnesses had already gone. There might yet be time to prevent this meeting of the boss and her employer.

A few quick steps brought her to Morris Comsky. "Was that Boss Nordhoff talking to Julian?" she asked, with an effort to make her tone one of mere curiosity.

"None other," replied Snap, his beady brown eyes shining, his mind alight with the possibilities of acquiring the mighty politician as the firm's newest client.

"What do you suppose he wants, Snap? Julian has never handled any of his cases, has he?"

"Mark Nordhoff has never before had a brother locked up in the Tombs, charged with murder in the first." The junior partner vouchsafed a knowing wink to the pretty and trusted member of their office force. "His defense would be the making of the firm, girl."

"But Julian doesn't like murder cases."

"The Nordhoff case is a lot more than a murder case, small one."

"I think I'll be running along," she announced suddenly, and started for the door, under impetus of a vital idea. But in the outer office she was disappointed. Julian had already gone. Ignoring the blond stenographer who hailed her with a pleasant greeting, she hurried out.

"Do you suppose she's got a date with the head of the firm?" the blonde inquired of the dismal-visaged woman at the adjoining typewriter. "It sort of feels like something's in the air, don't it? Anyway, she needn't get so snippy with yours truly; *I've* got gent friends of my own!"

CHAPTER XI

SIGN BOARDS OF CONFLICT

JULIAN was not in the hall, and Roxana Frisbee waited impatiently for the next downward-bound express elevator, angry with herself for having let him get away.

Just why she particularly feared to have the lawyer meet the political leader to-day she did not specify to herself. But fear she did, although certainly the feeling was not dread that her employer should discover her recent activity in Nordhoff affairs. She would have told him that herself, had there been occasion for the confidence.

"I'm in a dreadful hurry," she said to the elevator man with her most winning smile as she boarded the car. And it was with satisfaction that she saw him skip half a dozen doors with a "Next car, please," for the waiting passengers.

On the first floor exultation seized her; after all, fortune was with her this morning, she thought, for her quick glance had discovered Julian standing in the outer lobby of the building. He had been buttonholed by Abie, the firm's ambulance chaser, otherwise known as "The Buzzard," who had been in the act of rushing up to the office, probably with some new case. She did not hesitate to approach them and listen to the last of Abie's report.

"This cabman's got a hummer of a case against the city," the employee was saying. "There was a hole in the asphalt. His wheel slipped into it through no fault of his driving and he was thrown from his high chair."

"How did you land the case, son?" Randolph asked.

"He's flat on his back in Bellevue with a broken arm and leg," The Buzzard exulted. "I gets into the ward with my pull and tells him I'm the regular attorney for the hospital. He sees everybody shaking hands with me and swallows the bull con like as if I'd sugar-coated the pill."

"Well, go to the office and tell it to Snap." The attorney frowned. "I'll look into it later — bigger fish to fry to-day. But remember, Abie, we are no longer interested in cases against the Traction Consolidated."

"I'm wise," said the young fellow with a parting grin.

Just outside the door, Roxana fell into Julian's stride with a quiet word of greeting.

"Going toward the subway?" he asked, looking neither annoyed nor gratified.

"If it pleases the court," she smiled. "Has Abie landed something good?"

"Only a cheap damage suit against the city. I'll have to clip that young vertebrate's wings. He's getting too eager to bring in the cases. First thing I know he'll have me on some judge's carpet."

"I wish you weren't going to see this man Nordhoff," interrupted Roxana.

The remark was so surprising and sudden that Julian half stopped to peer down at her. But her eyes were turned to the pavement.

"That's rather a queer wish. What's on your mind, Roxy?"

She hesitated in her need of a logical answer. The truth she would never dare tell him and she had always found it difficult to equivocate where Julian was concerned.

"Nothing — nothing tangible," she finally admitted. "Just a woman's intuition of trouble ahead."

"And exactly what is it that these superfine intuitions tell you?"

"That you shouldn't go to meet Boss Nordhoff. Please, Julian, respect my nervousness for you. Telephone him that you are too busy to come. Transact your business over the wire."

Randolph was greatly puzzled by her unwonted agitation. "You can't be yourself this morning, my dear. Why, I don't even know what he wants to see me about! But in this man's town Marcus Nordhoff is of sufficient importance to command anybody's attention. Give me one reason why I shouldn't go to the conference."

"He's such a powerful boss and so — so ruthless," she returned vigorously. "Suppose you don't agree to whatever it is he wants? He could ruin you just as he has ruined men mightier than you. I'm afraid for you, Julian, with all that political force behind him."

The face she lifted was so serious that the lawyer checked the laugh which her expressions of fear had incited, and again began groping for an explanation of her solicitude.

"So you're afraid the big boss wants to crush me, are you?" he remarked. "I must say you are not very complimentary. But ease your mind, dear girl; I don't

think Nordhoff could invent a situation in which I could not take care of myself. I've played the game from too many angles since coming to New York to be caught napping."

"If you're determined to go," she insisted even more earnestly, "don't meet him in his own lair — don't go to the club. Telephone him to come to Sherry's or the Waldorf, and take me with you. Then you'll have a witness to any proposition he may make. Won't you do that for me, Julian? Remember, it is for *me*, Julian!"

"You seem to have a most exaggerated idea of Boss Nordhoff's power," he replied in a tolerant tone. "He is not at all dangerous at present. He is in serious trouble over this scrape of his brother's, and probably wants no more of me than my opinion regarding the best attorney for the defense. You must have been studying the Nero cartoons about him in the *Morning Era*. You forget that the *Era* is an organ of the opposition party. Don't worry; he can't throw poor little me into the arena for the lions to nibble!"

But, although his words were positive, spoken with no hint of indecision, Julian knew that by no means had he ended this unexpected controversy. He felt a small hand pressing his arm in a way he well knew to have influence, and he found his gaze drawn downward into an intense little face suddenly stripped of its mask.

"Supposing this is just a whim of mine, shouldn't it matter to you? Remember that I seldom have them — whims. Just because I have given you so much, Julian, am I never to ask anything in return? Is it all for nothing, dear, that —"

There was an honest tribute in the break of the girl's

voice and the high-tide of feeling in her face that could have left no man untouched. Julian was thoroughly a man. Although puzzled, he bent to her sympathetically.

"Hush, Roxy dear! You have chosen a rather public place for a scene and there is no cause for it, my girl. You are not the only one who has given. You know that —"

"Then I *ask* this of you, Julian. I implore it. If — if you want anything more of me, I — I demand it!"

Caught by her vehemence, allured by the fire of the eyes uplifted to his, a fire which he well knew was lighted only for him, Julian choked back a half-uttered exclamation of impatience, and, with an unsteady intake of breath, continued to meet her gaze. Halted by the passing traffic as they started across Lafayette Place to the Subway station, they stood still, just as, for the moment, all the man's recent resolutions seemed to stand still.

"Come, come, Julian! Don't spoil your promise by hesitating," continued the girl, quick to realize her advantage. "This Nordhoff case means little to you, no matter what it is the boss wants. Even if he wishes you to undertake the defense, what would it be but one more item in your long list of triumphs? I ought to mean more than that. Don't I, Julian — *don't* I? You've been doing well enough in the past; we've tasted happiness together and there's much of it — *much* of it ahead."

"Of course it is not a matter of life or death for me to meet Nordhoff," began the man, scowling down thoughtfully into the demand and promise printed on her face. "But I don't see why —"

Glancing up from the precocious triumph of her look, Julian's eyes suddenly met those of another woman. Seated in the tonneau of her automobile, warmly wrapped in her gray furs, Lora Nelson was passing down-town in the slow vehicle stream. Her face was tinged a Dresden pink, although the wind was not sharp, and the gentle lines of her mouth were disturbed by a decided downward curve. With her cold gaze squarely meeting his, and the superciliousness about her mouth deepening, she bowed to him gravely, deliberately.

Although perturbed, he did not fail to notice that seated beside her, speaking earnestly to her, was Robert Partland, her uncle's partner. Julian deducted that Miss Nelson's attention was being invited to his present appearance with the piquant Roxana Frisbee, with whose name his own had been rather notoriously associated.

The machine moved forward, and Julian Randolph stood, his hat still grasped in his hand, staring after the dull copper tints of the hair that showed beneath Lora Nelson's hat plumes. Then, although he quite lost sight of her in the rabble of the street, he threw off the touch still on his arm and straightened to his full height.

"I don't mean that, Roxy." Curtly he returned to the interrupted conversation. "I *do* see why I should refuse your request, and I don't mind telling you the reason; neither my old life nor my old practice satisfies me any longer. I intend to improve myself and all that concerns me. This call of Nordhoff's may be an opening. I am sorry to refuse the smallest caprice of yours, for you always have been kind to me personally, as well

as a great help in my work. You will have to excuse me now." He held out his hand.

Ignoring the proffered farewell, Roxana glanced at him with a look of alarm on her face.

"But the perjury mill?" she murmured defiantly.

"That I intend to do away with as soon as — well, as soon as convenient."

"And Abie — The Buzzard? You considered his new case!"

"Abie is a valuable man, and I did not wish to offend him just now. But I shall refuse all such cases in the future."

Although she had not met it often, Roxana Frisbee could recognize defeat. Instantly, by virtue of her sex, she set her keen wits to divine its cause.

"Julian, who was that woman?" she demanded abruptly.

"You mean the woman who spoke to me from the auto — the one riding with Robert Partland? She is the relative of a lawyer friend of mine."

"And how well do you —?"

"I know her only slightly. Come, Roxy. We have loitered for a good ten minutes on this street corner. Tell me good-by and let me get up-town."

"I'm glad she knows you only slightly," she murmured, "for she did not look at all overjoyed to see you."

At this shot, Julian glanced down curiously at his companion; at her glistening, dark eyes; at the warm color that had flooded her face. Noting the suppressed threat of her manner, he felt for her all at once a great distaste. With more decision than before, he offered her his hand.

"Good morning, Roxana. After your proviso of a few moments ago I take it that I am to see you only in business hours and on professional matters."

It was not so much with pity as with a pervasive weariness that he saw the color suddenly bleached from her face by his words, saw the clutch in her throat and the moisture that dampened the flame in her eyes.

"Of course, I didn't mean exactly that," she said, giving him the look a woman has for her one master. "I only said what I did as a last resort to keep you from meeting Boss Nordhoff. After — after the past, you might have humored me!"

This retraction caused Julian Randolph, for the first time in his life, to regard a woman as a serious difficulty.

"But why your solicitude? Why —?"

"Because I *know* him," flared the girl. "There is no one so calculating — so brutal."

Julian raised his eyebrows.

"You *know* him? You assure me of his brutality?"

For the third time recently Roxana Frisbee found her employer's professional skill at innuendo aimed at herself. Pulling up her figure, she laughed lightly.

"Needless to say, I don't speak from personal experience," she asserted. "But everybody knows Mark Nordhoff's reputation. Good morning, Julian. Let's forget this little discussion of to-day as soon as possible. Friends such as we have been can't afford to disagree. You've never been able to do without me for long, have you? And," she added slowly, "I am sure I've no intention of doing without you."

Julian's thoughts as he descended into the subway were not pleasant ones.

"It was devilishly clever, the way she combined that

last reminder with a threat," he mused. "I wonder if she's going to interfere with — Well, she shan't! No one shall. But Roxana is never hysterical without some shrewd reason for it. I'd like to know just why it is that I am to be so careful with Boss Marcus Nordhoff."

CHAPTER XII

THE PRICE

BRAZENLY partisan in politics was the Organization Club. It had no desire for members who were not of the party faith, and any break with the powers that ruled it meant speedy resignation from its lists. Withdrawal was forced by petty annoyances, if, perchance, it did not come voluntarily.

The clubhouse was the incubator in which the party hatched its most intricate campaign schemes. The most important political conferences were held under its roof. Slates were made, broken, and repaired in the privacy afforded within its imposing walls. When finally determined, these were shipped off to the party conventions, that regularly constituted delegates might think they had something to do with nominating the ticket.

All the big men of the party — State and national — achieved membership, whether they could afford it or not, although the initiation fee was a royal one and the annual dues heavy. Not to belong was to acknowledge one's self of no particular party consequence. Governors, senators and congressmen from many states held cards of associate membership. When the party was locally in power, the mayor and the commissioner members of the mayor's cabinet were in the club's active list, as were a majority of the board of aldermen. Judges,

public-service commissioners, police magistrates and lawyers who desired to be one or the other were much in evidence. Rich contractors, who hoped to grow richer through lucrative municipal connections, realized its advantage. Several directors of the Traction Consolidated were members, and even those who were of the opposite political faith recognized opportunity and voted annually the considerable sum necessary to pay the dues of the monopoly's various managers, superintendents, "fixers" and handymen. A similar practice was followed by other public-service corporations in order that they might have opportunity to profit through the favor of the party which so often dominated in municipal politics.

As the local boss of the party, Marcus Nordhoff was inclined to look upon the club as his personal property. Certainly no application for membership was ever posted under the rules before it had his approval. He had come to use the palatial house so much as a convenient private office that a suite of rooms on the third floor was always reserved for his exclusive needs.

It was in one of these rooms that he had decided in conference with his closest advisers to oust Martin Dennis as leader of the Village district, and to give the place of influence to his own brother. And it was in the same room that he sat this noon impatiently awaiting the arrival of Julian Randolph, a man whom he had never before considered worthy of cultivation.

"What the Sam hill does that shyster mean by being late?" he grumbled aloud as, for the fifteenth time, he glanced at his watch.

His last occasion of considering the lawyer recurred to his memory — when he had put "thumbs down"

upon Randolph's application for membership in the club. How that hot-blooded outbreak of Cliff's had changed everything! A few weeks before, this same outsider would have jumped like a trout to a fly at the chance of a conference with the boss. Now, with his brother in the Tombs facing trial for murder in the first degree, with his own political majesty hanging on the flimsy thread of the brother's acquittal,—now, even Julian Randolph took his own time to answer the summons!

Meantime, the object of the great politician's indignation had left the subway at the Grand Central station and decided to walk to the club. Still puzzled over Roxana's odd forebodings on his account, he felt that if the situation with Nordhoff developed as she feared, he would be better fitted for the clash after a brisk tramp.

As he approached the club he, too, recalled the fact that his recent application had been quietly rejected, but blamed his unpopularity upon Nelson, Sheen & Partland, the Traction attorneys. At the time of his attempted membership he had not yet accepted their annual "retainer" to abandon his successful line of personal damage-suit practice. The fact that he could reasonably attribute the black-balling to these legal rivals, all three of whom were members of the club, had served to salve the wound of the refusal.

"If Nordhoff wants what I think he wants," mused Julian, as he swung along in the crisp wintry air, "it won't do me any harm to remember that I wasn't good enough for his pet organization several weeks ago."

There was no delay after he had given his name to a uniformed attendant in the entrance hall.

"Mr. Nordhoff is waiting for you upstairs," was

the prompt assurance. He found himself speedily conducted into the presence.

His first glance at the boss gave him acute surprise, for the change which the troubles of the past few weeks had wrought upon the leader was conspicuous. Half a dozen new wrinkles of depth crisscrossed his heavy face; his hair looked grayer at the temples; there was a puffiness about the eyelids that suggested troubled nights.

"Glad to see you, Randolph," began the autocrat in a tone of geniality which Julian felt to be slightly forced. "I suppose you already have an idea of what's on my mind?"

"It may bear on the case of your brother," suggested the lawyer, sinking into one of the padded-leather chairs.

"I thought you'd be able to guess. Since that unfortunate affair occurred, it's been the only thing on my mind, and I fear it won't come off until Cliff is a free man."

"If you think there is any point on which I can advise you," said Julian courteously, "you have only to command me."

"*Any* point? Why, man, it is a case of *every* point!"

"You mean just what, Mr. Nordhoff?"

The party leader straightened in his chair and looked steadily into the face of his visitor. "Look here, Randolph, you're too big a man, and I'm too desperate a one to waste time with any tactics. The truth is simply this: I want you to take entire charge of my brother's defense. I'm depending on you to save him."

The proposition was a genuine surprise to Julian, for he had not much of a reputation as a pleader in

murder cases. There had come to him a fair measure of success in the three or four which he had handled; but, as they were of meager interest to the public, with defendants of no particular importance, they had attracted scant attention.

That Nordhoff might want him about some detail of jury manipulation, for which he had an unenviable reputation, was the most he had expected. It was startling, indeed, that the boss, who could command the finest legal talent, the most famous criminal defenders, should consider putting the case of his brother into the hands of Randolph & Comsky. With characteristic deliberation, Julian outwardly busied himself lighting a cigar, while inwardly he examined the proffer.

"I appreciate the compliment, Mr. Nordhoff, and I sincerely thank you for it," he essayed at last, "but —"

The conjunction brought a rapid interruption from the boss. "This is a matter of life or death and there can be no 'buts.' Cliff must go free, and you are the man for the job. I will make it worth your while, Randolph." The frown on his face changed as he studied the imperturbable expression of the younger man and gradually was replaced by a pleading look.

"There are attorneys in New York with more experience in defending first degree cases," offered Julian, as if too modest to accept the tribute.

"Yes, I know — experience in losing them! I don't want the experience, man. I want brains to win. Look here, Randolph; I'm not going to quibble with you. You're a gentleman, and I can trust you enough to say that I don't care what it costs. I'll pay your price without a murmur."

Julian was still inwardly puzzled to account for the

autocrat's sudden access of confidence in him. "There are many reasons why I don't care to take the case," he replied. "Although I consider myself successful in several specialties, I realize that your necessity demands the very highest talent, and I feel compelled to admit that you can probably do better. I do not understand why you wish to force this — ah — honor upon me. With your political influence you should be able to reach an understanding with the judge who is to try the case; after which, you should retain some lawyer who has his particular confidence and friendship."

"Fix the judge?" repeated Nordhoff moodily. "God knows how I've tried. I even sent to the governor and had old Van der Water, of Troy, assigned here to relieve the pressure. Friends down at the criminal courts saw to it that Cliff's case was put on the visiting jurist's calendar."

"An excellent start," commented Julian, gazing enigmatically, in a way he had, at the glowing tip of his cigar.

"But we counted without our host," continued the boss. "Van der Water, who, according to past performances, should have been reached easily through his notorious habits, has taken it into his fool up-State head to reform and show the people what a righteous judge looks like. He has brought his wife down to the city to keep him in the good man's path, and the best we can get out of him is a promise of exact justice."

"Which is not a strong enough promise for the requirements of your brother's case."

The boss grunted. "I'd hate to risk it."

"Then why not turn the screws on one of your own judges — you've put the robes on enough of them?"

"I've tried that, too, and found them a bunch of chicken-hearted ingrates," growled Nordhoff. "I might just as well be frank with you. I don't see a chance of fixing things with the trial judge. The attorney who takes this case has got to pull the trick some other way, and I am putting it up to you, Randolph. They tell me you can beat any case."

"Who is so kind?"

"Judge Northmore, for one."

"Isn't it too bad that Judge Northmore is not going to try your brother?" Julian asked, with impersonal regret.

"He's lost his nerve — afraid of the press, of public opinion. But forget about the judge. They say you can beat *any* case. Isn't that so?"

"Well, I haven't lost many," the big pleader admitted, with a modulated expression of his delightful, sanguine laugh.

Suddenly the boss got upon his feet and faced the younger man. "You know as well as I that every man has his price, Randolph. For the Lord's sake, name yours, and let me crawl out of the anxious seat!"

Julian, who had also arisen, was standing at one of the broad windows of the club, looking down upon the bus and automobile tops of the twin currents of passing traffic. From this view-point, the extremity of the party leader appeared in a new light. He glanced once more at Nordhoff's troubled face. Yes, the man was probably willing to go to any lengths to save his family from the ignominy of contact with the electric chair. The financial side of the offer had not appealed to him; but was this not, perhaps, opportunity of another sort? What was it he had been seeking from the morning he

had confirmed to himself the force of his feeling for Lora Nelson? If he were shrewd, might not the successful handling of Cliff Nordhoff's defense permit him to climb quickly from the semi-disrepute of his present practice into a standing which even that imperious young queen would recognize?

"Come, Randolph!" cried the boss petulantly. "You're a man of decision — give your answer."

Slowly Julian turned from the window, his former ultimatum regarding the demand of the leader withdrawn. He saw a way to make a bold strike for the only reward he would consider — his rehabilitation in the profession.

"I am afraid you wouldn't pay my price," he said with deliberation.

"Try me! I am rich enough not to count the cost in an emergency like this."

"I am not thinking of a money price," returned Julian, his eyes, from behind narrowed lids, making an intimate study of the Nordhoff expression. "Mere money could be easily arranged."

It was the turn of the boss to feel puzzled. Up to that moment he had suspected that the lawyer's hesitation was for the purpose of increasing his fee.

"Out with it!" he commanded.

"I want to be a judge." The words fell from Julian's lips, carefully accented.

"You want to be a judge?" queried Nordhoff, as though doubting that he had heard aright. "You want to wear the black silk robes and sit in judgment — *you?*" Even the urgency of tact failed to keep a derisive ring from his tone.

"I want to be a judge." Julian repeated his words.

"This is no time for trifling," Nordhoff said crisply. "You ought to know that I couldn't put you on the bench even if I wanted to, Randolph. The people wouldn't stand for your record. They're getting sort of particular about their judicial timber. They wouldn't vote for you, and there'd be a roar from the lawyers that would burst the public eardrums. The bar association would —"

Suddenly Julian whirled upon the older man and saluted the table top between them with a heavy fist.

"Damn the bar association!" he fairly shouted. "They're a lot of abject hypocrites. Why, I've laughed at them for years! I told you you wouldn't pay my price — not even to save your brother." Seldom did Julian Randolph permit himself a sneer, but when he did it had effect.

"But your record, Randolph!" protested the boss.

"If my record is good enough to trust a brother's life to, it should pass muster for you to play politics with. Besides, you are forgetting my terms at Albany as assemblyman and the jokers I've invented for the party. I've worked hard there — perhaps not hard enough to merit membership in your exclusive club — but still hard enough for our party to owe me something."

Again Nordhoff was sorry he had listened to Nelson and Partland to the extent of drawing a black line through the ambitious "shyster's" application. Randolph's sudden show of spirit and power made him seem all the more desirable as his brother's defender. Daring work would be required to free Cliff, he knew, and when had his senses received a more daring demand than this bombshell just thrown at him: "I want to be a

judge"? The straw of compromise floated within reach and he clutched it without further meditation.

"I might — in case everything went right at the trial — I *might* slip you in as a city-court judge."

The expression of frank disgust on Julian's face made words unnecessary to tell Nordhoff that the lower judicial rank did not appeal. Then he laughed again, this time more heartily, more pleasantly, more derisively.

"Well," the boss continued, although with a scowl of obvious reluctance, "suppose I strain a point and make you a judge of special sessions?"

"It must be justice of the supreme court or nothing." There was a combination of carelessness and finality in Julian's tone that made Marcus Nordhoff inwardly writhe.

"But the people won't —" He attempted fresh protest.

"Why wait for the people? Justice Montgomery died last week."

The boss attempted a pretense of not grasping the significance of this last statement. Although Julian was in no way misled by the other's look of inquiry, he did not object to elucidating.

"With Justice Montgomery's death there came a vacancy on the supreme-court bench which the governor fills by appointment until the election in November."

"But the governor —" parried Nordhoff.

"There need be no buts about the governor," smiled the lawyer. "You made him, and you own him."

Nordhoff recognized the stupidity of attempting a denial. "Will the appointment to this Montgomery vacancy satisfy you?" he demanded.

Julian nodded.

"It is a satisfactory start," he said. "In addition, I should want you to promise me the party nomination for the full fourteen-year term in November."

The boss gazed at him with renewed amazement, but with the growing conviction that before him stood the man who could save his brother, if any one could. However, he did not forgo one final sputter of protest.

"But the people —"

"Forget the people; it won't be the first time you've done so. Before election I shall have made my record as a judge."

"You've certainly established a record to-day at driving a bargain," yielded the political autocrat. "I only hope you'll drive that jury as hard as you've done me. Very well, it is settled, then. If you get Cliff a verdict of acquittal, I'll see that the governor appoints you."

"And when the judicial nominations are made?"

"You shall have the nomination," promised Nordhoff with a heavy breath. "It will be playing with fire; but, as you know, I have no choice."

Not for a second, from the moment of the politician's intimidation, had Julian's keen eyes left his face. He was searching for possible mental reservations, their compact being one that could not safely be couched in black and white. But he found nothing in Nordhoff's outward show that seemed to jeopard the redemption of both promises.

The two proceeded at once to the more prosaic preliminaries of the defense. The matter of necessary money was settled with the query of "How much?" from Nordhoff, and the drawing of a check when Julian

had named ten thousand dollars as a sufficient opening fund.

"We shall doubtless need more later on," he remarked; "but that can wait until the jury panel is drawn. There is just one thing more you can do today."

"Let's have it." Already the boss showed that he felt vastly cheered.

"Go down to the Tombs and have a talk with your brother. Give it to him straight that he is to obey me to the last letter of every sentence, and is to ask no questions. Tell him I'll be busy this afternoon looking into the case from the outside, but that I'll visit him tomorrow."

"And old Van der Water?" asked Nordhoff, still obsessed with the idea that further effort should be made with the trial judge.

"Leave Van der Water severely alone," ordered Julian. "All I want from the judge is the exact justice which he has already promised. I'll see that we get it."

CHAPTER XIII

TAKING A HURDLE

THE lawyer quitted the Organization Club with the tacit intention of returning directly to his office and plunging into the preliminary study of the Nordhoff murder. But before the meter of the cab he hailed had clicked off the first mile of his down-town trip, he began to realize in himself symptoms of mental fag. The early incidents of the day, the unaccustomed tax upon his emotional system, the recent interview with Boss Nordhoff, with its clash of wills, the sudden stirring within him of his despotic ambition and the tactics of his ultimate success, seemed to have depleted him of initiative for further mental effort.

Reaction took possession of him; the thought of his steam-heated office and its legal library grew repugnant; his obligation to the political boss became second in importance to his duty to himself. He drew one deep inhalation of the winter air and with it a vital longing for Charlemagne, the beautiful black horse which he stabled at the Saddle Club near the entrance of Central Park.

Through virtue of his monstrous capacity for achievement, Julian knew that he had often been referred to by the public as "something other than a human being." No one had ever heard him contradict

this characterization, but privately he acknowledged and subverted to the fact that he was mortal. The time he paid for his several forms of recreation he considered premiums on the life insurance of his career.

He reversed his order to the chauffeur and soon reached the palatial stables where was housed the dearest of his luxuries.

As was his habit after donning riding togs, he supervised in person the saddling and bridling of his mount, which pawed and whinnied keen pleasure at the prospect of a canter. A neigh somewhat less anticipatory answered from the next stall, the section of a blooded bay filly which, for several weeks past, had been flagrantly fascinated by the splendors of Charlemagne.

"Blond Bess has sure got one awful crush on your black, sir," observed the stable boy in attendance, a small, red-headed youngster with arms of steel and a heart for horses as great as the precocity of his mind. "She's always nosin' him over the wall and eggin' him on to conversation."

"What do you suppose their conversations are about, Carrots?" Simultaneously Julian bestowed a smile upon the boy and a pat upon the cold nose of the bay.

"What's all reg'lar conversation with a female about, sir? Gossip, gen'ally," grinned the small attendant. "Most likely she's criticising the quality of their breakfast-food oats, or saying what mean fellows some stable-boys are, or arguing about which of 'em has got the best owner."

"And what sort of an owner has Blond Bess? She deserves a good one."

"Sa-a-y!" The lad rolled his eyes expressively. "I don't mind telling you that Bessie here don't deserve

nothin' in the owner line she don't get. Some dresser and some peach — yes, sir!"

"From the particular fruit of your comparison, Carrots, I deduct that the owner is a lady. I hope, for the sake of Bess, that she is a perfect one." Julian curved this pleasantry upward from an inspection of his saddle girth.

"Well, Mr. Randolph, I've seen some ladies in my day — likewise in my job — both perfect and otherwise, but this one comes nearer my taste than any that ever set her three-and-a-half in a stirrup of my holding. She gen'ally rides in the A. M. and often takes me along as her groom. Me and her's pretty good friends."

"I understand now why they let you exercise Blond Bess the other afternoon," commented the lawyer. "I couldn't imagine who was following me."

In sudden diffidence Carrots glanced up and nervously fingered the buttons of his uniform. "Of course, if you mind, sir, I'll not trail you again. But you see, Bess has got kind of coaxing ways and the minute you take your big black out, she begins to snifle something awful. She's just crazy to tag along. The other day she made such a row in her stall that the manager gave me leave to follow you, but I won't again if —"

"No objection whatever, son," exclaimed the large man who also loved horses, giving the small one a friendly slap on the back. "Charlemagne and I are both glad to hear Blond Bess whinny and you shout whenever you can join us on the bridle path. I guess we're ready to be off now, Carrots. Good-by, Beauty Bess."

"According to my mind, he's one O. K. gent — and

it ain't because he's free with the coin either," mused the urchin, when left alone to appraise the silver disc that glorified his calloused little palm.

The afternoon was ideal for riding. Not a breath of wind slashed the air, which was just cold enough to make speed pleasant to the steed and the warmth of saddle motion a delight to the rider. Once astride, Julian blessed the fit of intolerance that had guided him away from his office.

Crossing Fifty-ninth Street, he turned into the bridge path and gave Charlemagne the rein, to which license the horse responded with that swift but dignified trot which so indubitably showed how proud was he of their appearance. There was distinction about the lawyer's saddle-tight riding which marked him from the usual posting equestrians of the park, and bore testimony to a certain year of "roughing it" on a Western ranch when he had won back health and strength after too zealous law-school application to Blackstone tomes. Many people in passing noted the grace of his natural seat and the cut of his riding clothes, the women to admire, the men to envy.

But Julian was not thinking of riding form or horsey tailors this afternoon, any more than he was giving conscious attention to the sheen on the ice-limbed trees or the immaculate stretches of snow that lifted up from the path. Neither were his thoughts centered upon the hot-blooded young man in the Tombs, the sole accountability for whose life had been thrust so recently into his hands. The chance reflection that Boss Nordhoff probably would have considered this fresh air excursion a very irresponsible method of commencing so desperate

a battle, brought a fleeting smile to his face, as he assured himself that the morrow would be quite time enough to settle down to serious work on his new case.

His real thoughts as he rode along doubtless would have appealed to passing mind-readers as exceedingly egoistic. They centered in the mental whisper, "Mr. Justice Julian Randolph." His tongue formed to the thought and silently repeated it. In truth, the title he had just successfully bargained for had a goodly sound! It was not any impression upon himself, however, with which he was particularly concerned.

A frown crossed his brow and his eyes stared straight ahead as he contemplated the possible effect of his purchase upon Lora Nelson. He felt as impatient as a boy to tell her, not of his being retained in the important murder case, but of the title that the trial's success would surely win for him.

Just as she had scorned him in the rôle of legal defender of pickpockets, putting a frosty period to the most intimate conversation he had ever held with her, she doubtless would think little of him for undertaking this notorious case, even though it concerned a political murder committed by the brother of the boss, who was her uncle's intimate. But the reward which was to follow, his appointment to the supreme court bench and later election to the full term of the office — surely that would interest her!

"Mr. Justice Julian Randolph!" The salutation seemed to rustle from the rimy branches of the trees.

"His honor, the Judge!" applauded every hoof-beat on the frozen path.

Bending down over Charlemagne's neck, he ran his long gloved forefinger through the animal's silken scruff.

"Julian Randolph, J.," were the letters which the digit traced.

"How does it feel to you, Charlemagne?" he laughed. "Does my prospective title impress you, old fellow?"

The black steed met this facetiousness with a whinny, a tenser uplift of the neck and a caper to one side of the path.

"I hope it pleases her as well when she hears it," exclaimed the man.

As he noted the suggestive way in which Charlemagne tried to glance backward through the trees, however, his approval changed to indignation. "You're not thinking of me at all; you're just hankering for Blond Bess! I think you're mighty selfish. Oh, I know you're lonesome for her — I'm hankering for some one, too. But let's be as happy as we can in the present, boy. And we mustn't look back; we must always — Why, I believe there *is* some one behind us!"

Certainly an equine call, better understood by the beast than his master, had waved toward them from the rear. Soon the approach of lighter hoof-beats could be distinctly heard and the friendly neigh increased into an imperative signal. "Wait a bit, if you're not in too much of a hurry," it begged as plainly as human language could have done.

"It's Blond Bess and Carrots," congratulated Julian, allowing his mount to pull up at the side of the narrow path. "I wish I had your luck, Charlemagne."

Without turning, he flung a cheery shout to the comrades thudding rapidly toward them.

"Hello, Carrots. Great day for a ride — *great!*"

The black added his strident notes to this salutation,

and delightedly pawed the ground. The clap-clap of approaching hoofs grew swifter and more metallic to the ear, and was soon augmented by the regular heavy breathing of a horse in speed.

So confidently did Julian expect to see the vivid, plaid-capped head and wizened face of his little friend, the exercise boy, that his surprise was as overpowering as it was glad to realize who actually sat astride the bay filly when she was pulled up panting and frolicksome, within hand-reach of himself and his mount, stationed like sentinels at the side of the path.

"Say — say, I *have* your luck, boy!" he exulted to Charlemagne in a whisper.

The lithe, gray-habited form, the flash of ivory skin, the flutter of coppery hair beneath a gray derby hat — all told him the truth like an inspiration.

"Of all this world's good sights — Miss Nelson!" he exclaimed with a genuine thrill in his voice.

Her gay response to his greeting seemed to indicate that she had forgotten all haughtiness in the unconventionality of their encounter. She looked radiantly beautiful and as amiable as a boy chum.

"This is truly wonderful," beamed Julian, "that you of all people should turn out to be the owner of Blond Bess!"

"And that *you* should be the owner of Charlemagne!" the girl exclaimed.

"Only see how happy they are, Miss Nelson. I hear that they are sweethearts of a winter's standing." He indicated the two beasts, sniffing noses coquettishly.

"Of a winter's standing — in stalls! That is decidedly good," laughed Lora.

"It would be cruel to separate them now. Tell me,

why can't Charlemagne and I exercise with you and Bess to-day?"

Lora's glance traveled from the gallant head of the black horse to the no less gallant figure of his rider, then deepened into thoughtful contemplation, as she encountered the brilliant eyes bent upon her. His face was frank and eager, with the still uncovered hair clustering above it; the whole look of the man was attractive and promising of a fine intelligence. And, after all, they were both young and strong and together on a perfect day.

"Why not?" she queried in turn. "We should make our horses happy. And nothing is too much of a surprise for me this afternoon. I was sedately on my way to a reception, after lunching with Mr. Partland and Uncle Bruce, when I suddenly felt a longing for the park. I usually ride only in the —"

With a startled look Julian broke into her speech.

"You were driving along, headed toward your usual pursuits," he stated, "when all at once an insistent demand to be out in the air overcame you and you longed for Beauty Bess. That's a parallel case to what happened to me. Why, Miss Nelson, we can't fail to be companionable to-day! Come, four of us are going to be happy instead of two."

He whirled Charlemagne about, and the two beasts broke into a spirited trot, of necessity moving close together in the narrow path. The swift impact into the still-cold of the air tingled the blood of both riders and mounts, snatched their spirits high, delighted them with the sense of movement and power. When, breathless and glowing, they later pulled into a walk, they seemed to have outsped all formality.

"I was once asked what extraneous influence made me the happiest," said Lora. "I know to-day. It is the sense of motion."

"Is it — only that?" Julian's face flushed with more than exercise as he bent the gaze of this premature question straight into her eyes.

And the girl did not attempt to suppress him with her manner of previous days. Quite without coquetry, she studied his expression; then smiled and looked away.

"Somehow it doesn't seem possible that you are the same Miss Nelson I've met before," continued Julian, the fires that burned in his heart for her glowing in his face. "You are so approachable, so human."

"Am I to gather that I seemed unapproachable and inhuman to you in the past?"

"Absolutely."

"Then —" With a swift change to seriousness, she returned an earnest look to his. "Then I may venture to say, Mr. Randolph, that you don't seem at all to me as on former inspections. You seem so frank — so honest."

"And I have looked dishonest to you before? I am very sorry." The man's voice was as grave as his face had grown under her eyes.

She caught her breath as though to protest, then hesitated. For several minutes they rode in silence.

"That is rather a harsher term than I should have used," she said at last. "Even if I thought it, I do not know you well enough to force uncomplimentary deductions upon you."

"But I want you to know me well enough. As a matter of fact, Miss Nelson, you *do* know me well enough. If your deductions are not complimentary, it

will develop either that you are wrong or that I need to hear them."

"Why?"

At her monosyllable, Julian's steady regard of her deepened. "I'll tell you why, Miss Nelson. I want to be friends with you."

Something about the simple words clutched at Lora's heart, as was evidenced by the flush that rose from under her white cravat to stain the purity of her coloring.

"And I," she murmured, "I don't know whether —" All at once she turned fully toward him. "Mr. Randolph, can you take a plain statement without resentment?"

"Only dishonesty could make me resent a statement of yours," he answered, with an unsmiling face.

"Then I'd like to say that, although you attract me wonderfully, I don't believe that I care to be friends with you."

"And in my turn,—*why*, Miss Nelson?"

"Because I fear — because I am afraid of disappointment in you."

As though she had struck him with her crop, Julian shuddered and then straightened. Several times she glanced around at his clear-cut profile, set straight ahead, during the quiet canter into which their horses broke.

"Perhaps you do not quite understand me," she essayed when the caprice of the beasts was satisfied.

"I think I do."

As he again turned toward her, Lora was amazed at the sincerity and sweetness of his expression. She would not have believed it possible without seeing, that

a man of his wonted imperious manner could look so gentle.

"Let me tell you how well I understand you. Let me show you that I have at least one of the requisites of friendship. Out here where the snow is pure and the air is clear and the path is firm"—he made a gesture that comprised the little stretch of landscape visible to them—"you want to be as straightforward as nature. You have ideals and, on account of them, you don't want friends you'll ever have to apologize for."

"No. No, I don't," murmured Lora. "I have been hurt too many times in the past. And I don't want to be hurt. I—I want to be happy."

"But you want to be happy as the air is happy to-day, as the snow is happy, as—"

"As the horses are happy," she interrupted eagerly. "Of course they haven't the moral obligation that is born to us, but, so far as they go, they are happy because they are *right*. No sense of reproach mars their companionship. Don't you see that satisfaction lies only in right? Pardon me, Mr. Randolph, but —"

"Don't you ever ask my pardon!" he exclaimed with great vehemence, but no bitterness; then continued as though excusing a misfortune rather than deploring a fault: "You think I am not honest, that, as you put it, my life has not been 'right'—"

"I have followed your career in the papers," she put in quietly.

"Yes, and you have drawn your conclusions. Well, Miss Nelson, probably many of them are correct. But I do not approve of everything that I do. And you must let me assure you with all the vital honesty of to-day that I want to be — right."

He turned a face upon her whose candor she could not disregard.

"Or do you mean," she asked gravely, "that you desire to rise to great heights and will do it right — *if you can?*"

Caught by her words, caught by the boyish truth of her look, Julian involuntarily checked the protestations that rushed to his eloquent tongue. Then, leaning over, he grasped the horn of her saddle as though to strengthen his claim upon her.

"I — I don't know," he faltered. "Won't you help me to find out?"

For a long time the moment held them. At its end Lora straightened proudly and began to speak with seeming irrelevance:

"One of the sports I best enjoy to watch is a steeplechase, Mr. Randolph. I know you do too, for I have seen you ride. I love the clean spring of the thoroughbreds over the bars and the brush. Often some of the commoner breed get over, but if you watch them you will see that they don't take the jumps just right. You are a man of mind, Julian Randolph. I like you and I believe you are going to get over some record-breaking hurdles. But if you're a thoroughbred — *if* you're a thoroughbred — take them clean!"

Some hours afterward Julian remembered that he had entirely forgotten to tell her of the bargain he had made.

CHAPTER XIV

THE CLIENT

A CHAMBER of hope ascendant in Gotham's official House of a Thousand Sorrows is the counsel room of the Tombs' prison. Despair — grim, unrelenting, acute — may run rampant through the many tiers of the prison proper, but it is barred absolutely from the room of consultation. There is an air of optimism about it which even the bars at the window and the guard at the door fail to dispel. This spirit is expressed in the comfortable solidity of the furnishings, heavy tables and pudgy armchairs, such as might be found in a board room. Even the air differs essentially from the atmosphere of the cell alleys, for it seems more like that of out-doors, containing scarcely a hint of the musty, prison-house reek.

"Your lawyer's waitin' for you downstairs," says turnkey or trusty at the cell door as he throws back the bolts.

This is one of the most joyful messages that can come to the anxious one, assuredly more permeated than any other with specious hope. There is a certain dole about the visits of wife, mother and sundry other relatives; there is at least an inward blush of shame at the coming of unrelated friends, no matter how devoted and sanguine they may be, for they must be talked to from behind disconcerting bars. But "your lawyer's waitin'," is the Tombs' translation of "glad." It is a call

that induces a squaring of the shoulders, one that may be responded to with eager steps.

To the counsel room hastens the new prisoner to plan his defense. Often it becomes the stage on which his testimony is rehearsed, if the case be sufficiently desperate to require the defendant to take the stand. Even after trial, after the jury has perhaps turned "thumbs-down," the room is still to him a chamber of hope, for there he learns of the legal steps that are being taken to appeal his case. In the frequent extremity of an adverse decision from the higher courts, the prisoner, now convicted and under sentence, goes there for the administration of the last dose of cheer — the chance of a pardon from the governor. Even then the grinning visage of the old hag, Despair, halts outside the charmed door.

No lawyer worthy of the name ever carries any but a cheerful expression into the counsel room of the Tombs. That is a requirement of the profession, part of the game, one of the ways he earns his fee.

The counsel room is also a chamber of truth. More real accounts of crime are whispered there than ever reach the ears of juries. Under the sanctity that shrouds the relation of attorney and client, a man bares his very soul, that his defender may the better veil the ungainly shape of it afterwards from the district attorney's relentless gaze. The necessity of deceiving his own lawyer no longer appeals to the guilty, for the number of attorneys who will not take a criminal client is known to be small. The prevalent idea seems to be: "Get the best attorney you can, come across with the truth and then, after he knows the worst, trust him to plan a successful defense."

Julian Randolph was no stranger to the chamber of hope. He possessed an acute realization of all its requirements and possibilities, which probably accounted for the ambiguous smile on his face, the morning after his retention by the boss, as he awaited the appearance of his new client.

This Nordhoff murder was easily the most important criminal case he had ever undertaken. Certainly The People, as represented by the peppery district attorney of the opposition party, would fight bitterly for Cliff's conviction. If Julian's heart had been asked to speak his real opinion of his client's responsibility, it would have been, "Guilty as charged!" He also fully realized that he had been retained as a forlorn hope, as a man who dared take monstrous chances with such skill and foresight that he was not likely to be caught.

Well, he proposed to dare as he had never dared before! And certainly he had no intention of being tripped up. He firmly believed that the case would be his last before the bar, since success in it meant that he would look down upon such issues in the future from the chair of judicial dignity.

After his ride of yesterday, which had swayed him powerfully, he had mentally descended to regard the clearing of Cliff Nordhoff as the highest barrier in his personal steeplechase. She had said that she loved the sport, that she thrilled over its achievements; yet she had only substantiated his own deductions concerning her ambitious nature — that to attract and win her he must himself achieve.

The Nordhoff case was his hurdle; his mount was knowledge of the profession and its tricks; his crop was his own power to use this knowledge. With the in-

trepid gray eyes of Lora Nelson upon him he would take it like one of the thoroughbreds she so admired, and he would wave his cap in triumph to her when he landed squarely on the other side.

Into these confident musings walked Clifford Nordhoff, his important charge, a man whom he never before had seen. He arose with no slight curiosity to greet a younger edition of the boss, minus the flaccidity of high living and the worry lines that mapped the brother's mighty struggle to maintain party dominance. It was with pleasure that he noted the sturdiness of the youthful Nordhoff's figure, the neatness of his garb, the solid set of his jaw. He liked also the strength of his handshake. But there was a shiftiness of eyes that did not please him, and an expression of lurking fear, which, though not unnatural under the circumstances, he instantly decided must be dissipated.

"Glad to meet you, Nordhoff," said Julian heartily.

"Not half so glad as I am," returned the prisoner client, who looked favorably impressed by the appearance of this man into whose hands he had been directed to put his life. "I'm in pretty bad, I guess, and it has seemed as if my brother was never going to find me a lawyer."

"The selection of a lawyer is a serious matter; one that should not be made in a hurry."

"I know that." Clifford edged his chair closer to that of his adviser, as though desiring to get under a protective wing. "But it's Hell sitting upstairs behind those bars. It is my first experience, you know."

"Never arrested before, Mr. Nordhoff?"

"Not for anything that amounted to shucks. I've been in a shindy or two, but they never put me in a

cell until now. It was always a case of the captain's room at the station house for the brother of the boss until bail came and then going around next morning to hear a friendly magistrate say: 'Discharged!'"

Julian observed that the present case was a trifle more serious.

"I thought I was going to get away with this, too," explained the client youthfully. "Would have, if the district attorney had been 'right.' You knew that the coroner let me go?"

"That coroner business was a mistake." Julian shook his head. "And you made it worse by running away to Lakewood. But that is past, and all in the day's work. We'll have you out of here for keeps in no time."

"Mark seemed confident that you could do the trick when he was here yesterday. You cheered *him* up, at least."

"And you're next on the cheer-up list. Let me see what your smile looks like. They call this room the chamber of hope, and in your case you're safe to make the hope as strong as you like, for it certainly will come true."

"My brother said I was to tell you everything," ventured Cliff in a tone that already showed the effect of this encouragement.

"That's the idea, Nordhoff, and there's no time like the present. Suppose you let me have the whole story. Don't make the mistake of dividing it into sections."

In a voice low enough not to be overheard by an attorney and burglar client who were conferring in another corner of the room, Clifford Nordhoff began his recital with the announcement of his candidacy for dis-

trict leader. He went into the details of the spirited campaign which had preceded that fatal primary day, giving himself and his gang so much less than the worst of it that Julian again reminded him he must have the truth, good or bad.

He told of the head-breaking clashes which had occurred between his followers and those led by young Michael Dennis, who had done the active campaigning for his father. He made a point of explaining that perforce he had kept out of these fights because the seasoned campaigners sent into the district by his brother had taken away the gun he was accustomed to "toting," and would not hear to his "mixing it up."

Julian's regard of his client's face intensified as the events of primary day were approached — the story of the killing. An indefinable change had come into his manner. They were nearing the point in the conference where it would probably be necessary to probe for the exact truth lest the district attorney, later on, surprise them with some part of it.

"Primary day started off peaceful as a lamb," descanted young Nordhoff, speaking slowly, as if weighing his words. "Our crowd voted early, and some of them often. We were making sure of a walk-over. Along about eleven o'clock, Finnegan, a big henchman of Martin Dennis, who was running one of the polling places, chucked out a couple of chaps who had come over from the East Side to vote a few for the good of the party. They were registered all right, and I went back with them, and jammed their votes through. It was when we got back to the corner that — that it happened."

He hesitated. Producing a handkerchief, he mopped

his brow, on the surface of which perspiration had spurted in bubbles, despite the comfortable temperature of the counsel room.

"Go on," encouraged the attorney as his pause lengthened. "I must have the whole story, you know."

"Well, while I was kicking up a fuss with the election board, some one tipped off Mike Dennis." The prisoner's voice was now scarcely more than a whisper. "Just as I got back to the corner he came up on the run. He'd been boasting around the district about how he was going to get me, and I knew him for a bad one — a gun fighter. Still, I wasn't looking for trouble on primary day, and headed across the street."

Again Nordhoff hesitated. An old stager would have poured out the story without these breaks, but the brother of the boss, as he had said, was new to the exigencies of retribution. It came hard for him to admit the killing in so many words.

"Come across now!" urged Randolph, with just a shade of sternness in his tone.

"I was going to the other side of the street to keep out of it," continued Clifford haltingly, "but I saw Mike make a move for his gun — and I — and I shot him."

He heaved a sigh of relief which broke off in the middle when he noticed the attorney's expression.

"If that isn't a case of self-defense, as the coroner said, I don't know what is," he added hurriedly.

"What was it you say you saw Mike Dennis do?" Julian's eyes were on him, cold, but demanding.

"I — I saw him reach for his gun."

Suddenly the lawyer rose, pushed back his chair, and began to gather up some papers which he had spread about the table. "You'd better go back upstairs and

think things over for a day or two, young fellow," he remarked, with an air of finality. "When you remember exactly what happened — when you get quite ready to tell me the truth, I'll come back and we'll have another little talk."

"But I am telling you the truth."

"You're lying to me," said Julian blandly. "You know as well as I do that Mike Dennis didn't have a gun, and that he didn't make any false move for one."

"Snooks Madden will swear that he took one off Mike before the cops —"

Julian's look of contempt was withering. "You'd like to try your own case, it would seem," he said. "Trying to put manufactured evidence over on your own attorney! Keep that up for a while and they'll begin testing the current up at Sing Sing. Exactly why do you think I'm bothering with this affair, anyway? Is it to be entertained with the half-baked yarns which you and your cronies have thought out to give you a get-a-way?"

"Don't go! I implore you, Mr. Randolph, don't desert me!" Nordhoff cried, as the big lawyer started for the door. "I'll — I'll give it to you straight!"

"See that you do, then." Julian returned to his chair. "One more break like that and you may undertake your own case with a proverbial fool for a client, so far as I am concerned."

"Well, here's the gospel truth, sir: I was sore over things Mike had been saying about me around the district, and I was all stirred up by the scrap I'd just had at the polling place. It looked like a good chance to get even and I — I croaked him."

"That sounds something like it," approved Julian.

Once again the beam of hope ascendant lighted his face to cheer the prisoner.

For half an hour more he put questions to his client and made careful note of the answers. He secured the names of eye witnesses who were friendly. Got some details on the bad records of the Dennis factionaries who were on the scene, obtained general information about the district, the threats which the dead man had made and a host of other data which might have bearing on the defense.

"And this Snooks Madden?" he finally asked, with no apology for his return to Nordhoff's own attempt at vindication. "Can we trust him?"

"Snooks will go the limit, Mr. Randolph," assured the prisoner earnestly. "He's my friend."

"I'll have to look him over. If it seems that he'll stand the gaff, perhaps we'll use him."

Having entirely restored his client's self-confidence, Julian turned to a further chapter of the confessional. He set before Cliff the gravity of the ordeal which was to come. He drew a picture of the merciless tactics of the prosecutor and the completeness of the machinery of his office for ascertaining fact.

"Now if there's a single thing in your past that could possibly be brought up against you," he urged, "I want to know about it. They must spring no surprises. They'll go through your past with a fine-tooth comb. Tell me what they may find."

"I can think of only one thing they might pull on me," faltered Cliff after a few minutes of thought. "A detective named Bouker is sore at me because I had him reduced, and I think he is wise to part of it."

"To part of what?"

"It's a woman case, and I don't care to talk about it."

"You'd rather I'd hear it in the court room, I suppose, and have no come-back ready?"

Clifford shook his head at this, then, with the brevity of extreme distaste, related a long-past chapter of his life.

"But I didn't do it," he concluded. "I simply stood for it. I just let them use my name to save another guy."

"And this other, this guy?"

Again the young man hesitated, gulping his dislike of these relentless, seemingly irrelevant questions. "He is — he's my brother," he finally admitted. "But I'd almost rather go to the chair than have it come out on him."

"What sort of proof have you that you were not the man?"

"I've got papers at home that will prove it," said Cliff. "My wife can get them for you. But if you use them you'll have to figure out some way of saving Mark from exposure."

"I'll look out for him," consented Julian, "and I think I can build some sort of a toboggan to put under Detective Bouker, if he shows any interest in this case. But I want the proof. Suppose you write a request that Mrs. Nordhoff give the papers to my messenger."

When the note had been inscribed and signed, Randolph prepared to take his departure. "Keep a stiff upper lip, old chap," he said. "Don't let the bolts and bars get on your nerve. I'll come in again to-morrow."

While the lawyer was waiting at the Centre Street door for the warden to let him out, he took from his

pocket the order which instructed Mrs. Clifford Nordhoff just where to find the desired papers. As he read, he smiled.

"Now I rather think the boss *will* give me that full-term nomination," he congratulated himself.

Rapidly he walked toward his office, his thoughts again reverting to his memorable ride of the previous day. "It certainly is a topper of a hurdle," he commented, "but I've simply got to take it!"

Somehow the method of the jump didn't seem to matter so much since its difficulties had developed as when in Lora Nelson's presence. The imminent point now was that he should get over.

CHAPTER XV

STINGING WIRES

THE next week found Julian Randolph one of the busiest men in New York. Preparation for the forthcoming murder trial was enough to tax the capacity of any ordinary flesh-and-blood lawyer, but for Julian there were added responsibilities. Not for a minute did he lose sight of the fact that he was a prospective judge, and the disposition of a practice such as he had developed was a matter of much diplomacy.

Particularly pressing was the trial of Million Mulligan, whose defense had been prepared with such pains. Julian realized that, even could he have spared the time, this case, as he had planned to fight it, was too dangerous for an attorney who expected soon to don the black robes of a justice of the supreme court. Yet Million could not be left absolutely in the lurch.

A postponement of the extortion trial was the solution he ultimately adopted. With the ready assistance of Boss Nordhoff, this delay was secured without much difficulty, as the case was to come before a Nordhoff-made judge, one of those who had refused the responsibility of trying the delinquent brother. This dignitary was glad indeed to grant the minor favor of delaying the Mulligan case, particularly as the general public was not interested therein. Snap Comsky secured the formal postponement by appearing

with an affidavit regarding a missing witness; at which a young assistant district attorney stormed a bit, but could do nothing more forceful.

To appease Mulligan had required more potent argument, for he felt certain of acquittal, and chafed at delay. With an untried indictment hanging over his head, he had found that he had no stomach for the particular activities to which he wontedly devoted himself. But the junior partner, the glib-tongued Snap, ably assisted by the very diverting Miss Frisbee, had quieted him with the whispered information that the judge who was to hear the case had been discovered to be friendly with the gamblers who were the prosecuting witnesses. After deliberation, Million came to congratulate himself that he had entrusted his affairs to such astute attorneys; and, since the conference resulted in his taking the pretty star witness to dinner, had felt much comforted.

Comsky had been admitted into Randolph's full confidence regarding the promised judgeship, and was delighted to lend his best efforts to the defense; for the practice which Julian was renouncing would become entirely Snap's own, should the Nordhoff verdict be "not guilty." One solemn promise, however, Julian exacted of him.

"You must agree never to go back into the personal-damage game against Traction Consolidated."

"It was rich pickings," Snap mourned, his beady eyes glinting avariciously. "Wonder if I couldn't bluff them into a continuance of that do-nothing retainer?"

Then the senior partner delivered what to Comsky was a real body blow in his declaration that the agree-

ment for two thousand dollars a month must be abrogated before he could think of accepting the governor's appointment to the supreme court bench.

"But some judges are in on the graft," Snap protested.

"There is one judge who is not going to be in on the graft," Julian returned.

Snap, who was not on speaking terms with reform of any sort, literally snorted his disgust. "Huh!" he exclaimed indignantly. "Getting honest already, eh? Take it from me, friend Julian, your appointment is only promised and depends on getting your young fool off scot-free. You'd better not change from the tried-and-true methods until the jury brings in its verdict."

Ultimately, however, he gave a reluctant promise to turn his back on the Traction damage business, and make no effort to renew the compact of inactivity at so much a month.

Many times since the Nordhoff case had come to Julian with its great reward in prospect, he had regretted his acceptance of the Traction bribe. The ethical side of the negotiation did not bother him half so much as the fact that he had inscribed his name beside that of Robert Partland upon an agreement that could never satisfactorily be explained. He realized that this might be used as a club which he would have trouble dodging in his judicial future.

But this morning he laid aside all the annoyances of getting rid of his practice to concentrate his mind on one feature of the Nordhoff defense, its most important feature — the jury. Word had come to him from a friendly commissioner of juries that the panel from

which the Nordhoff twelve would be taken was set for official drawing the next day. And there were three names which he particularly desired on that list! The uninitiated might have been puzzled that his first step toward getting them there was an inquiry for Miss Frisbee.

With something of a shock he heard his chief clerk report that the young woman had not been at the office since the persuasion of Mulligan, nearly a week ago. He had not even missed her.

Despite the Nordhoff defense plea for preoccupation, he knew that he would have difficulty in persuading the young woman, who had so often given him vital aid, of the legitimacy of the slight. He reached her on the telephone, and, after profuse apologies, urged an invitation to luncheon that day.

Her reply surprised him, it being caustic even for her tongue.

"Some more dirty work for me to do, I suppose?"

Never in the past had she named it quite that. Still, he was forced to admit to himself that calling a spade a spade was a proper return for his neglect. As it happened, he did have work for her to do which was not exactly clean.

So he resorted to further apologies and the assurance that he desired nothing except her charming presence across the linen at Hahn's. Although not for one minute did this deceive the dark-eyed little person, she eventually accepted his invitation.

From the telephone, Julian turned to a filing cabinet, from which he took a drawer of index cards. A whole half hour he spent searching through these slips, de-

sisting only when he had separated three of them from the drawer. These he laid in a row before him on the desk, then bent to study the typewriting upon them, his brow furrowed with calculation.

The cards were inscribed:

"Rudolph Katz, cobbler, No. — Second Avenue."

"J. Hamilton Martin, retired, No. — Riverside Drive."

"Harry Frater, steam fitter, No. — West Fifteenth Street."

Below each name was a memorandum, partially in cipher, which reminded him just why he had claim on the individual listed and how far he might press it.

"Addresses scattered, occupations diversified, none concerned in politics," he mused. "Yes, I think these three will turn the trick!"

He transcribed the names, occupations and addresses upon a blank card, which he slipped into his waistcoat pocket.

An hour later, at the busiest fraction of the luncheon respite, he met Roxana Frisbee at the designated downtown restaurant. Although many hungry-looking persons were awaiting accommodation, the two were escorted at once to a corner table, from which a "Reserved" card was whisked.

"From your message we expected you sooner, Mr. Randolph," volunteered the head waiter fulsomely. "We've had something of a job keeping your usual seat, sir."

Julian did not bother to thank the man except in coin of the realm. Crisply he gave an order, adding the request that it be hurried. The majestic factotum

sped away in order personally to make known the patron's wishes, as though he felt honored by the commission.

"Thank Heaven, I know your tastes so well we needn't slaughter time discussing food!" remarked Julian to his guest.

With a weary air Roxana plucked a slightly withered gardenia from the buttonhole of her tailored suit and flicked it into a corner.

"My taste has had time to wither since I last lunched with you, Julian," she retorted, her eyes upon the discarded flower. "Perhaps I have sprouted new ones."

Julian smiled across at her. "That reproach is valuable chiefly for its artistic qualities," he said. "You know how busy I've been, dear girl. And besides, I hear you've been dining with a richer man than I — one Mulligan."

"Yes," she admitted, watching him narrowly. "And I like him. But I can remember equally busy times for both of us when we've still managed to have frequent bites together."

He continued to smile into her severe expression. "Come, come, little Roxy, it's not like you to spoil a party."

But Miss Frisbee refused to relent. "This is not a party," she snapped. "I realize fully that it is a business appointment."

"Well, we used to enjoy even our business appointments, didn't we?"

"I know, but that was before we had advanced so far."

"So far as — what?"

Roxana frowned. "You insist on diagrams to-day,

don't you? I mean, advanced so far that it is possible to have what is — merely — a business appointment. Something has come between us, Julian."

The smile on the man's face turned to frank displeasure. "Don't go off on that tangent to-day, Roxana. You are seeing wraiths of late."

Deliberately, the girl placed her two elbows upon the table, settled her rounded mite of a chin in her palms and focused her intense eyes on the face of her vis-à-vis.

"I am considered a successful business woman," she remarked coldly, "and the reason I am successful is because my instincts are developed to a very unbusiness-like degree. These instincts do make me see wraiths. And I don't mind adding that my chief wraith lately has seemed embodied — with a healthy skin, reddish brown hair, and very earthly-looking draperies of gray fur. Its appearance is so clear in my mind, Julian, that somehow I can't help attaching almost mortal importance to it."

As she spoke, a smile, half sardonic and half sad, spread over her face, for she had not failed to see the effort which Julian instantly exerted to control his expression. Twice he started as though to reassure her; then suddenly he seemed to decide on another manoeuvre, for he drew himself up with his most domineering manner and spoke almost roughly.

"These imaginings and reproaches are not becoming to you, Roxana, and, once for all, I don't intend to listen to them or to answer. You've known me a long time and you've simply got to trust me to be square with you. That's part of the woman's bargain — trust. If you cannot keep to it — well, I certainly

should be excused from some of my obligations, that's all!"

A terror reminiscent of their last interview showed in her eyes. "What is it that you wish me to do?" she asked more humbly.

He slipped from his pocket the card on which he had transcribed the three names. "Your friend is still in the office of the commissioner of juries, I suppose?" he asked.

Roxana stiffened and caught a quick breath. "You're not going to — not going to ask me to load another jury?"

"Just this once, Roxy. You know how easily you can do it through him."

"But you don't know what demands 'my friend,' as you call him, has lately been making on my self-respect," murmured the girl pleadingly. "If you did — if you *did*, Julian, even you couldn't ask any more of me in that quarter."

"We will call this the last time."

The assertive way in which he spoke seemed to snatch and hold Roxana's attention. With a bitter droop at the corners of her mouth, she began to inspect him; and the more she looked, the more resentful grew her expression.

"You should have been a slave driver, Julian Randolph; but I feel to-day that you have given me one lash too many. You neglect me for weeks, and then suddenly demand that I do your will at any cost to myself."

"At any cost?" repeated Julian. "You are getting really melodramatic. You are too clever to —"

But the girl interrupted with increasing acerbity.

"That wretched jury clerk told me the last time that I could not put him off once more with promises. He insists on payment with interest for his past aid. If you cared anything about me personally — if you really cared, you wouldn't ask this."

A look of honest regret and equally honest worry had spread over Julian's face.

"I hate to urge this, Roxana, I really do. If I didn't know so well your will-power and your devilish shrewdness, I should under no circumstances do so. But you are not going to balk at this fence of 'just once more,' are you, girl? I'll never ask anything of the kind from you again — I swear it — and you can break with the clerk afterward as hard as ever you like. Just get these three names —"

"I won't do it." Miss Frisbee spoke decidedly.

But Julian reached across the cloth and grasped her hand with a touch even more decided than her voice.

"You must do it — for me, Roxy," he stated, deepening his voice to fondness. "Get these three names drawn on the jury panel, and I'll never ask anything hard of you again. This case is the biggest I've ever had, and I can't afford to take any chances. To clear Cliff Nordhoff —"

At the sudden muscular tension of the small palm within his and the startled light in the eyes which his own had claimed, the lawyer paused to study his guest.

"Oh, it's to clear Cliff Nordhoff, is it?" Her words were accompanied by a light laugh. "So it's the Nordhoff jury you want me to fix? Well, this is irony!"

"Irony? Exactly what do you mean?"

"You don't need to know everything — *exactly*,

friend Julian," she said, with an odd, mirthless smile. "However, you'll be glad to hear that I've changed my mind about fixing this jury panel. I'll do it, although not for your sake."

"For whose sake, good girl?"

Roxana continued to smile with as nearly a grim expression as her piquant face could assume.

"For the sake of my sense of humor," she observed, "and also because I am rather sorry for the young man. It must be hard to be sacrificed for your brother's crimes — even though you don't know it."

"You are talking very strangely, Roxy. Marcus Nordhoff did not commit this crime. Why, the poor man is —"

"I know. But his cursed ambition — his political ambition — was responsible for it. Anyhow —" she checked herself sharply. "Anyhow, I am willing to fix your jury. That is all you need to know, my astute employer."

While Miss Frisbee uttered these ambiguous words, a sudden tide of color rose in her face.

Julian Randolph watched her from between narrowed lids. "This is twice you have exhibited to me a violent hatred of Boss Nordhoff," he commented slowly. "Would you mind telling me what it is all about?"

"I should —" began the girl. Then, as she looked longer into the flint-like keenness of the lawyer's gaze, her manner suddenly and completely altered. With a laugh of well-simulated sincerity, she lifted to his a look of adoration. "Don't let me fool you, Julian," she murmured as though moved by deep emotion. "I have only been manufacturing reasons to blind you to

the real one, which is that I am willing to do this thing just to please you. Sometimes I really get ashamed of loving you so much. But I suppose I shouldn't be ashamed of what I absolutely can't help, should I?"

"You could scarcely expect me to give an unprejudiced answer to that," responded Julian, a whimsical light on his face. "It would be too much to expect of any man to blame a woman for loving him."

Guilefully Roxana beamed across at him. "So forget all those Nordhoff suspicions, dear, and tell me this: when are you going to let me quit this distasteful work and set me right before the world? You say this jury planting is the last thing of its sort you will ever ask of me. Does that mean you are going to keep your promise of —?"

With an accession of his former annoyance Julian pushed his plate from him, although he replied, with pseudo-softness in his voice:

"Everything will be changed soon, my girl. I shan't keep you in doubt much longer. Just put over this last trick for me. Here are the names. Tell the jury clerk —"

After he had impressed upon her a few succinct instructions, the two quitted the restaurant.

CHAPTER XVI

MAKING SURE

MISS FRISBEE'S habit of doing thoroughly whatever she undertook was responsible for Lawyer Randolph's advance receipt of a copy of the panel naming one hundred qualified jurors from which the attorneys, for and against, would endeavor to select twelve, "tried men and true," to pass upon the guilt or innocence of Clifford Nordhoff.

The adroit young woman had arranged with her "friend" in the jury commissioner's office, not only for the planting of the names handed her by the lawyer, but also for the transmission to her of the complete list, the minute it was prepared. Thus the district attorney lost one of the small advantages of his office, the exclusive opportunity to investigate the panel in advance.

Julian's eyes brightened as they ran rapidly through the list and found that, duly inscribed and officially numbered, the names of Rudolph Katz, cobbler; J. Hamilton Martin, retired, and Harry Frater, steam-fitter, were scattered through the panel at discreet intervals, showing no peculiarity to attract the attention of his official opponent.

"A mighty neat piece of work, Roxy," he observed to the dainty brunette who sat opposite him in the

office watching the play of satisfaction on his features.

"I always try to be — neat," she returned with a laugh.

"I think that trip to Europe you hanker for with all expenses paid is about the reward this job suggests," he declared. "When the case is finally settled, I'll see that Mark Nordhoff gives you the adventure."

"And will you personally conduct the trip?" Her tone was one of banter, but her eyes showed eagerness.

"I fear I shouldn't make a satisfactory 'follow-the-man-from-Cook's,'" he evaded. "By the way, aren't you ashamed of yourself for mistrusting the boss that morning he sent for me first? Just think how it has turned out — an exciting jaunt to Europe for you, and the biggest case I've ever had for me!"

"The boss will bear watching, Julian. Probably he'll play square enough with you while the case hangs fire. But look out for him afterward. He's not thoroughly schooled in gratitude."

Julian met this warning with the "Randolph laugh." "What a suspecting minx you have become, Roxana! I'll collect that trip for you in advance, if you say the word."

"I didn't do this for Mark Nordhoff," she returned, "nor for a trip to Europe either. I did it for you."

"For me? Yes, I know," he interrupted, punctiliously softening his look. "Indeed, little Roxy, I thank you."

But almost at once the more intimate manner left him. He could scarcely refrain from pressing some pertinent probes regarding the young woman's attitude toward Nordhoff. All he said, however, was:

"Keep in touch with the office, girl. I'll be living and breathing this case until it's finished."

Pocketing the list of talesmen, he hurried to the Organization Club, where he had an appointment with the boss. One of the rules by which he had attained his phenomenal legal success was to squeeze thoroughly every advantage that came to his hand. Certainly there were possibilities of politics in the list which Roxana had secured for him!

"There is a little matter which you can attend to through the organization," he said to Nordhoff, after they had discussed several minor details of the defense. "Here is the panel from which we shall draw most, if not all, of the jurors. I'd like a report on the political affiliations of every man named."

"I can have it for you by night, Randolph."

"You will find, no doubt, that some of them can be reached through your district organization," continued Julian. "You'll know the best way to apply the screws. They must be made to see the light of 'not guilty' if they get past the district attorney and land on the jury."

"I understand," remarked the boss, and straightway set about the delicate task.

Of the three prospective jurors in whom Julian was particularly interested he said nothing to Marcus Nordhoff. Their political importance was entirely negative, and it was not likely that any of the party's henchmen would bother them. But he did take the trouble to visit all three in person that afternoon, and found them quite amenable to the task which, without mincing words, he laid out for them.

The night before the trial found Randolph and the

party leader at dinner in the lawyer's compact but exceedingly complete apartment.

The boss was nervous and ill at ease, for the strain of the preparation for trial had worn upon him. The fact that the newspapers were still screaming for justice added to his disquiet. The vital importance of the stake—his brother's life and his own political future—had begotten many sleepless nights. Indeed, he seemed even more disturbed than the prisoner himself.

"Cheer up, Mr. Nordhoff!" urged the attorney, as he finished shaking the cocktails which he had mixed at the buffet and poured two off into thin glasses. "Come, we'll drink to the success that is as good as won!"

"I hope so—I certainly hope so," mumbled the boss, and he tossed off the appetizer.

During the dinner, served with faultless precision by Randolph's Japanese handy-man, the host managed to keep the conversation away from the trial to begin on the morrow. And he succeeded so well that, by the time of the cordials, Boss Nordhoff was in a state of mind approaching the normal.

"I am sorry I didn't get acquainted with you before, Randolph," he remarked as they moved their chairs into lounging positions and lighted their cigars. "You're the best tonic for trouble that I know."

"Your troubles, at least in so far as the charge against your brother is concerned, are just about over." The big lawyer's tone vibrated with confidence in himself and the defense he had prepared. "Before the end of the week, Cliff will be a free man. I promise it."

"But how can you promise for a jury you don't

own?" demanded the boss, easily retrograding into his wonted pessimism.

"*How* I do it doesn't matter. Suffice it to say that I can almost hear the twelve saying: 'Not guilty.' So much for my part of the agreement, Mr. Nordhoff. But has it occurred to you that I have taken this case on a peculiar fee arrangement, that some sort of tangible assurance regarding the future judgeship we spoke of might not be amiss on your part?"

This query brought an instantaneous scowl to the face of the autocrat. "Didn't I give you my word on it?"

"But you might assure me that you intend to keep your word," returned Julian with a great suavity of manner that did not hide, however, the glitter of his eyes. "Have you discussed the subject at all with those in power?"

No matter how honest his intentions, the politician objected to direct questions concerning any of his manipulations. His first inclination was to resent Julian's effrontery; but he changed his mind on remembering the plight of his brother—the enormous family issue which he had entrusted to this steel-trap man whose guest he was to-night.

"It's all right, Randolph," he muttered. "The governor will make good if you just put over the right verdict."

"But have you got him in black and white?" persisted Julian.

"The governor's word would have been good enough for me." The boss spoke in a voice that rasped his impatience. "As a matter of fact, however, I *have* got him in black and white."

"Suppose you let me see his communication," was the attorney's urbane suggestion.

For just a second Nordhoff stared at him with rising ire. But again the exigencies of the situation commanded him. "Don't you trust anybody in all this world, Randolph?" he exclaimed, his hand obediently fumbling in his coat pocket.

"I am fairly well acquainted with all this world. I have to show juries and in turn — I have to be shown."

"Then feast your eyes on this!" Nordhoff tossed over a letter in the unmistakable, cramped chirography of the party puppet who happened to preside at Albany.

With obvious satisfaction Julian read, to the effect that the governor realized the emergency and would do as the leader requested. The last paragraph of the letter was not so politely couched, although it did not disturb the real issue. It read:

"I feel that the appointment of a man of Julian Randolph's record to the supreme court bench will be a bad thing for the party — probably for the State. Still, as you point out, the alternative of a conviction in your brother's case would be worse. The organization has lived through rawer deals than this. But I want to make the facts plain to you, that you may realize the magnitude of your demand, which, I hasten to add, is freely granted in view of my immense indebtedness to yourself."

"Does that satisfy you?" asked the boss, watching his host's derisive smile.

"It would seem to put the governor on record, although he is not exactly complimentary to me in his

verbiage," returned Julian blandly. "I shall certainly see to it that the gentleman at Albany has necessity to keep his word."

"May all the gods help you to do the same!" supplemented Marcus Nordhoff fervently.

CHAPTER XVII

RIGHTS INALIENABLE

SELDOM could Mrs. Berkeley Armistead filch an entire afternoon from her crowded social calendar, but when she succeeded she usually compelled Lora Nelson to the same outlawry, that they might enjoy it together. The two had treasured a devotion born in those hair-in-braid years when, a tall and a shorter miss, they daily had entered the portals of the same finishing school on the Avenue; with hair maturely coiffed to-day, they appreciated that the same idea had moved them in celebrating this first opportunity for a real talk since the holiday rush.

Cozily ensconced in Lora's gray-walled boudoir, with its chintz of lavender iris, they had sipped hot chocolate. Meanwhile, they had tasted the topic of spring fashions with the whipped cream, that of current plays and books with the first warming gulps, later, several possible schemes of interior decorations for their new country club house with the body of the liquid — all with the rare sense of satisfaction that can exist between women too large-minded, too appreciative of values, too heart-fond for rivalry.

But with the dregs, there seemed to Lora something suspiciously foreordained in the determination with which the young matron propelled the discussion toward the topic of the ultimate male.

Vida Armistead was a spirit-faced, satin-haired blonde, so fragile and small that her intrepid spirit and modern tendencies were difficult to grasp. The combination, however, had won her a unique, unassailable position in her social set. Now Lora, who knew her, saw significance in a slight squaring of the tender chin, in a concentration of the pink color below her flower-like eyes.

"This is all very nice,"—Vida's gesture encompassed the æsthetic, expressive apartment—"but don't you feel a lack in the fact that it isn't your own?"

"It's as much my own as a room could be," objected Lora. "You'd think so if you could have seen me kindergartening that decorator in tone-values."

"It is your own nest, yes, but it's not in your own tree—in your own woods. Don't you ever feel a twinge of the final and strongest appetite of woman, which, for want of a better name, I call the property sense? Forgive me, but you've been old enough for some time to begin hankering for an establishment of your very own, a — a man of your own."

Lora laughed, although her face looked somehow serious. "Still seeking my masculine, Vida? Your term 'property sense' is inspired. What real-estate owner, what married woman won't try to ensnare even her best friend into the same state?"

"Somebody needs to seek for you, to try to ensnare you, you poor, selfish orphan!" retorted Vida. "Really, Lora, as seasons and men come and go, I'm beginning to despair. If you showed the least interest, any instinct of selectiveness, I shouldn't feel so burdened by my responsibility as your most intimate friend. That you of all our co-débutantes, with your dream of

a face and your sylph of a figure and your manner of a princess in disguise, should persist in this life of —”

“Single blessedness,” supplied Lora.

“Single foolhardiness — single mulishness; for I never saw a larger assortment of eligibles than you have to choose from.” Vida warmed to her plaint. “Perhaps there lies the difficulty, the cause of your indifference.”

“No,” said Lora, no longer pretending to smile. “I am not indifferent to the subject, and the difficulty lies in a secret little ambition of my own. I don’t intend to marry until I stand every chance of making a success of marriage, which requires that all my love and all my faith be given to a man who can appreciate and return them.”

“Dear me, why be so serious over the first time?”

“Because I am rather old-fashioned, I fear. I intend that there shall be only one time. I couldn’t feel decent with more than one husband extant.”

“The dead ones don’t count?” interjected the irrepressible.

“You naughty Vida. You couldn’t look Berkeley in the eyes if you thought of him by number instead of name.”

“Oh, of course, it’s different with Berk and me!”

“And down in your heart, Vida, you want it to be different with my man and me. My only compensation for being so alone in the world, for not having an ambitious mother and younger sisters coming on, is that no one is gently, lovingly, determinedly shoving me toward the chasm of matrimony, as are most girls from the time they leave finishing school. Uncle Bruce has

a selfish value in that he needs me. So don't try to be all my female relatives, you little Dresden shepherdess with the heart of an octopus — don't put your frail weight to shove me toward the edge. Just pause and remember that my deliberation isn't caprice; it is soul-defense."

"It is dangerous, though," persisted the matron. "Deliberation is a habit as much as spinsterhood. They both kill impulse, the mother of marriage."

"Maybe mine will be born again," said Lora cheerfully.

But her little friend did not join in her laugh, and her face wore increasing worry as she continued: "And deliberation, you know, is contagious. Beautiful as you are, dearest, the eligibles might catch it, too. No, Lora, your ideas are the sort that make girls marry their chauffeurs and skating teachers. Such misalliances, we all know, do not prove successful. You think too much. I suppose that you are alone too much, although one thing I have always admired about you is that you never seem depressed — never complain. You could, you know, although from the outside you don't seem to be minus much, having looks, money, popularity. Still, I notice that most people do complain and complain sincerely, no matter what they have. You might sulk over being an orphan, for instance, over your dearth of brothers and sisters, over your uncle's absorption in his profession. But you always insist on being cheerful, when you could be, not really wretched but — well, un-cheerful. Now, you could better your state by being discontented. Why don't you get ambitious on this marrying matter, always remembering that you're not going to find a heaven

of any earthly state? In one way, my dear, you don't expect enough and in another, despite all that you are, it seems to me you expect a good deal."

"Maybe I do," Lora nodded contemplatively, "but women in general get what they want and have the courage to demand. Look at the vampires in paint and jewels and feathers driving along the Avenue. Look at the unselfish, hereditary slaves toiling in uptown flats. Look at witches like you, who demand true love—and get it. You supermanned Berkeley, you know you did!"

Vida protested: "That's a vulgar way to put it, when I felt an inalienable right to Berkeley the moment I clapped my eyes upon him!"

"And I have an inalienable right to satisfy my heart and my mind." Lora laughed triumphantly.

"Of course you have every romantic silly's right to wait until you fall in love," conceded Vida with a small sigh, "but when you do you'll fall far short of your heart and your mind. Mark my words, your cock-sure highness, when you do fall in love, you'll make terms, just like any other real woman."

"I wonder —" There was a startled, almost fearful look in the gray eyes which swerved to stare straight into the violet ones. "I wonder if I will — make terms?"

Perhaps more than the jangle of the telephone caused her shudder. She rose to answer the call.

"It's for you, Vida," she said, and handed over the instrument.

While her friend was engaged at the wire, she stepped to the window and gazed out among the trees of the park. The uncompromising, leaf-denuded black of

their shapes against the beaten, antique silver of the sky somehow reassured her. In nature distinct lines were drawn. Only vapors, only wintry night-shades could deprive the trees of their rigid forms. She, too, if true to her nature, might remain individual; she need not blend into the blur of conventionality.

At the click of the receiver on its hook, she returned to a chair, the startled question gone from her eyes.

Vida's face, on the contrary, was filled with discontent as she resumed her indolent loll among the mauve velvet cushions of the couch.

"Didn't you recognize Berk's voice?" she asked. "He's going to flunk dinner to-night, when he knows I'd specially planned one *à deux* — just for ourselves, by way of a change."

"Dear, dear, is even your inalienable, true-love confidence weak when he doesn't come home?" mocked Lora. "If you feel so upset with it, what would you be without it? But surely the most incomparable of husbands has a good excuse?"

"An excuse, yes," admitted Vida. "But what mere wife could say whether it is a good or bad one? A meeting of the executive committee of the Something-or-other Automobile Club may have been called suddenly and the matter to be discussed may be vital, but —" The flower eyes half closed under their curling petals and the piquant lips pouted. "Let me tell you from the inside, Lora, husbands certainly have a way of being disappointing."

"And you've slaughtered this beautiful afternoon urging me to acquire one!" cried Lora, then added more sympathetically: "I am sorry you are to be cheated out of this rare opportunity of renewing ac-

quaintance with your other half, but at least it gives you a rarer opportunity to dine with us."

"I couldn't stay as I am, and there's not time to go home and dress."

"Since you can stay, you will. There will be just Uncle Bruce and myself, and he'll be too delighted to see you to notice that you're not gowned *a la* Titania. So it's settled, even if it brings down on my head further advice founded on the precept that misery loves company."

"I'm not advising you to marry Berkeley or any one as unsatisfactory," snapped Mrs. Berkeley. "Husbands in the abstract are always better. I happened to love Armistead, and that settled it — or him. But you have such self-control, why couldn't you fall in love with an older man, for instance, one that you could love wisely and not too well? Our flat-footed friend, Robert Partland, is in love with you, isn't he?"

"Vida!" Lora's voice was heavier with reproach than amusement. "Robert has always appeared fond of me — ever since I was a child."

"Fond of you? Sometimes, Lora, I fear that you are growing into one of those awfully noble persons. Of course Robert just putteringly dotes on you. Everybody knows that."

"I suppose he does." Lora's agreement was casually spoken, but with a slight sigh that did not deceive her friend, and brought instant reprieve.

"I am not consigning you to Robert Partland, rich as he is said to be, when I know that you're dreaming of some young prince with raven hair and brilliant eyes and —"

"Raven hair — brilliant eyes?" An odd smile

formed around Lora's lips as she repeated the random words. "I'll promise you this, Vida, once I have met and decided on my prince, I shall invite you to look him over and shall really value your opinion."

It was perhaps half an hour later, long after their talk had been directed into more practical trend, that Lora said in an offhand way: "How should you like to go with me to a session of a sensational murder trial — the Nordhoff case?"

"A murder trial — how yellow-journalistic and shuddery! Berk never lets my dew-drop mind be smudged with even the head lines. Is Uncle Bruce to star?"

"No. He has nothing to do with it. The lawyer for the defense is a younger man, a Mr. Julian Randolph, whom I first met at the country club that spring, when you were West. He is said to be bright in his profession. I — I'd like to have you see him in action."

The small matron sat suddenly straight, and stared at her friend. While she looked she vented herself of divers questions and ejaculations.

"You mean? Is this a gleam of intelligence at last? Well, you ought to know how to handle a lawyer! Can he be one of the Virginia Randolphs? Would they let us in at the trial? Isn't there always a fearful crush? But then, of course, your uncle can arrange it, knowing all the judges and sheriffs and things!"

"In asking Uncle Bruce," suggested Lora, "we'd better let curiosity or uplift or something of that sort explain our interest. I haven't talked to him about Mr. Randolph. You see, they have clashed over past

legal cases and I don't think that my relative is favorably disposed toward him."

"But you are!" Vida laughed impishly. "He must be a paragon. And you have kept this weighty secret from me? You, Lora Nelson, have become 'favorably disposed' toward a man whom I've never even seen! I believe I could quite dislike you, if I, like Partland, weren't hopelessly your slave."

They were at the piano in the drawing-room when Bruce Nelson entered his home a few minutes before the dinner hour. Lora hurried into the hall, greeted him affectionately, and, when he had divested himself of hat and coat, readjusted the black bow tie which, as usual, was striving toward his left ear. Through his inherent carelessness of dress and scorn of a valet, Lora had taken upon herself the responsibility of his personal appearance. Ever since the death of her aunt in her early teens, she it was who had seen that his expensive, if heedlessly worn clothes made regular trips to the tailor's and dictated, without regard to his plea of the closest of associations, when they should be given away. And she paused to feel proud of her charge as he stepped to the doorway to greet Vida, a tall, distinguished figure of a man, with thick silvery hair that curled about his temples and a grizzled Vandyke beard.

"And where is that young scamp Berkeley?" he demanded.

"Berk is indeed a scamp to-night," declared the dainty matron.

"But you'll gladly overlook his dereliction, uncle, since it gives us Vida," inserted Lora. "You're too

cavalier at your tireddest to mind having two lovely women at your board."

"Nothing could rest me more — could put me in a better humor," he declared, making them deep and separate bows.

"Then now is a good time to ask a favor?"

"By all means," urged Vida, with the freedom of knowing herself to be a prime favorite. "You ask him, Lora, while I smile."

"What's up? What's the plot?" The renowned legal battler threw up his hands in pretended fright. "You're not going to ask me to take you somewhere, when you know my work is never done these days of legislative probers?"

"What we want won't make any demand on your time," Lora assured him.

"Although for your own sake we ought to bind you and drag you to some theater," put in Vida.

"Just a very brief note in your own impossible hand, uncle," Lora concluded.

Nelson relaxed in pseudo-relief; then, giving each an arm, he escorted them into the library, his own particular sanctum. There he seated himself at the broad writing table, pushed to one side a litter of papers which none but himself was permitted to touch, took up and dipped his pen.

"To whom is this mysterious missive to be inscribed?" He evenly divided his best smile.

The friends exchanged puzzled glances. Then Vida signaled that the mechanics of their petition must be operated by Lora.

"Would the sheriff be the proper official?" she suggested.

"New York County possesses such an officer," returned Uncle Bruce urbanely, "although addressing him depends on what it is you want. Are you seeking a body attachment for Berkeley, or do you —"

Lora interrupted: "We want a pass for two, Vida and myself, to the Nordhoff murder trial. Neither of us has ever been in court and the papers advertise this as most sensational."

"And Berk wants me to keep more apace with the times," fibbed Vida shamelessly. "He says that if I won't read headlines, I ought to go to see —"

Her voice dwindled as Bruce Nelson pushed back from his desk and arose. The amazed look which had greeted their first mention of the case settled into grave disapproval.

"The Nordhoff murder trial!" he exclaimed. "Of all ill-advised requests! You want to see and hear that? I can scarcely credit my ears. You would be seen and recognized, described by the reporters, pictured by the artists, and a whole pack of news hounds would swoop down on Berkeley and me to get the kernel out of just why two women of your class should feel interest in such a scandal. You, at least, Lora, ought to know that my rule of never wishing you to attend court would not be abrogated in this case."

"But the rule was made when I was a child," she objected. "Won't this trial be a famous one in the history of the city?"

"Entirely too infamous for either of you to participate in it, even as spectators." He spoke with crisp decision. "Go up in aéroplanes or down in submarines, if you must have new sensations, but, for the love of your relatives, if not of yourselves, keep out of the

court room! I'm sorry, Lora, dear. . . . No, Vida, there's no use unmasking that dimple. Your going is so absolutely out of the question that we'll all get in bad tempers discussing it, so come along to dinner. If I hear any more of this folly, I'll — I'll get out an injunction!"

It was characteristic of Lora's relationship with her uncle that she did not think of urging the question further. Never, even in her little-girl days, had she been on familiar enough terms with him to coax. But despite his unfailing courtesy of the years, a question about him, a plaint against him arose in her heart. What was there in the law that lawyers spoke so disparagingly of it? Why was he like so many others of his profession, in that he did not consider its workings fit for feminine inspection? Inalienable rights — wasn't one of the first of womankind that of understanding the affairs of her men?

CHAPTER XVIII

ON TRIAL

“**C**HALLENGED for cause!”

Again and again from the lips of District Attorney Dodd these words had echoed through the court room, which was crowded to a point approaching suffocation with a throng of curious or partisan spectators.

“Challenged for cause!”

The repetition of the call had become monotonous to all but the small jumping-jack of a prosecutor, who voiced it in an angry roar, the volume of which was entirely out of keeping with his physical insignificance. With each reverberation he would hurl a glare of tigerish fierceness toward Julian Randolph, who alone of the group about the Nordhoff defense table had the temerity to return him a smile.

There was monotony, also, in the rulings of Judge Kenneth Van der Water, which regularly followed the challenges, for invariably the district attorney was sustained and the talesman waved from the jury box.

Since politics was the point at issue, little Dodd had gone through the panel in advance with a magnifying glass. He had learned how every man voted, and knew exactly how close was the alliance of those who belonged to the organization party. At the very beginning of the long and trying day, he had endeavored to prove his belief that some of the panel had been tampered

with by the henchmen of Boss Nordhoff. But so skillfully had the advance work been done that, wherever there had been direct approach, the talesman proved too urgent a fear of the consequences to let slip any damaging admissions. The nearest the prosecutor got to confirmation of his suspicions was the faltering admission of a frightened German delicatessen man to the effect that he had talked the case over with his customers. But even in his condition of stampede, this worthy was certain that no one had spoken to him of the Nordhoff panel since he had received his jury notice.

Finding that Judge Van der Water's conception of exact justice involved the elimination of political partisans from the jury, Dodd contented himself with uncovering the brand of the Organization wherever it existed. To the consternation of Boss Nordhoff and the gripping fright of the accused brother, they saw the faithful, one by one, weeded out of the panel, and the jury box slowly filled with citizens upon whom the party had no particular hold.

Randolph gave evidence that he had not been idle by securing through the white-haired judge from up-State the elimination of several partisans of Dodd's party affiliation. Yet it seemed to the Nordhoffs that he was not pressing his right of selection as vigorously as he might have done.

The examination of one Rudolph Katz, a dull-faced cobbler, for instance, incensed them, for they were certain that they had no "line" on him. The fact that the district attorney was satisfied to pass the man with a few questions should have been warning enough for Randolph, in their opinion. True, he had objected to Katz as a jurymen, but he had not used one of the

peremptory challenges which are the right of the defense.

And later came a man named Martin, who declared that he had retired from business and was indifferent to politics. As Martin lived on Riverside Drive, the district attorney was eager to keep him in the box. Cliff Nordhoff, however, did not wish to be tried by "silk-stockings," and whispered as much to his attorney, but Randolph's challenge for cause failed to impress the judge and again the lawyer refused to challenge peremptorily, although he had plenty of that brand left.

To the amazement of the court crowd and the despair of the Nordhoffs and their partisans, the jury was completed toward the close of the first day, with the original panel of one hundred not quite exhausted. This speed was unprecedented in a murder trial of such importance.

Judge Van der Water was inclined to take to himself credit for the expeditious selection.

"I made them open their eyes to-day," he confided to his devoted helpmeet, on returning to their hotel. "They have a new respect for up-State judges, I'll wager. I showed the attorneys in the beginning that I would have no nonsense, no bickering, and that they need not take a week to find twelve men who would deliver an honest verdict."

And the white-haired little woman beamed a stauncher belief in him than ever before.

The failure of the Nordhoffs to transfer any of their fears to Julian Randolph surprised them. He was still placid when the twelfth man was sworn in, and Judge Van der Water turned the jury over to a bailiff to be locked up for the night.

"It is an excellent selection," was the attorney's comment to the newspaper men. "I am more than satisfied to leave the fate of Clifford Nordhoff in their hands."

So maddened became the boss over this unreasonable sanguinity, that he sought out Judge Northmore to discuss a tentative idea of changing counsel.

"I don't understand his letting the D. A. get away with the jury so easily," commented the judge, "but it will never do to swap horses while crossing as deep a stream as this. Besides, I know Randolph, and you may be sure he has an ace or two buried."

District Attorney Dodd left the room aglow with elation at his success in weeding out the henchmen of the organization party and filling the jury box in such short order. But intermittently during the evening the complacent face of Julian Randolph reappeared in his mind. It was not natural, under the circumstances, for the lawyer to wear that smile. The more he thought over it, the less he liked it.

"I wonder?" he muttered to himself several times as he reviewed the day in court. But he could manufacture no satisfactory replies to his self-put question.

The following morning the presentation of the State's case began with the testimony of the usual formal witnesses. The *corpus delicti* was duly established, and the street-corner shooting recited by eye-witnesses whom the district attorney had carefully selected from the ranks of the Dennis faction.

On the direct examination these witnesses pictured the end of Michael Dennis as a cold-blooded murder, more than deserving of the first degree indictment.

In his turn, Randolph took up these witnesses in

cross-examination, varying his method according to their individual temperament. Some of them he succeeded in muddling until they seemed to grow uncertain of their own existence. Others he involved in contradictions so hopeless that their testimony became worthless. With the several whom the district attorney had sent to the stand to prove premeditation, the big attorney was particularly severe. With masterly effect he riddled their tales of Cliff Nordhoff's threats to "get" the son of his rival for the district leadership. Every man of them knew that he had been through an ordeal when Julian indicated that he had finished.

Yet, despite his valiant efforts, an impression prevailed among the followers of the evidence when the State closed at the end of the third day that Julian Randolph had met his Waterloo at last. The prisoner himself had begun to lose hope, and it required an hour of his lawyer's most potent encouragement to get him in condition for his long night in the Tombs. The face of the boss had grown positively haggard under the strain, and the attorney's persistent cheer seemed to irritate rather than encourage him.

"To-morrow will be our day in court," Julian assured his client. "Hold your nerve and remember the story you're to tell on the stand. And, above all things, believe me when I say there isn't a chance of that jury convicting you."

Under the contagion of this confidence, Cliff shook off his funk sufficiently to go over the points in his favor.

"Well, anyway, Dodd didn't get hold of Bouker and that miserable story which would have been so hard on Mark," he ventured, with an approach to a grin,

"No, he didn't get hold of Bouker," returned Julian, "for the very good reason that your detective friend is enjoying a little trip to South America on official business."

The first witness for the defense to take the stand next morning demonstrated to the court-room audience that self-defense was the life preserver which Randolph hoped to buckle around his client. His testimony was a circumstantial account of the positive threats made by Michael Dennis the day before the primary. There followed corroboration from others who claimed to have heard the boasting. A pawnbroker next testified that within the week prior to his death, young Dennis had purchased a revolver.

The witnesses of this cycle withstood Dodd's pepper-box grilling quite as well as could be expected, in view of the fact that they had had little or no previous training in perjury.

Then Randolph digressed for an hour or so to pass a chain of character witnesses before the jury. Cliff Nordhoff was vouched for by citizens of every station, whom the lawyer's careful guidance, however, prevented from "overgilding the lily."

"The defense will now call Clifford Nordhoff," was the declaration with which Julian startled the court room.

The murmur of surprise which swept through the crowd brought a chiding rap from Judge Van der Water's gavel and the warning that further demonstration of any sort would be a signal for clearing the room. The district attorney smiled his satisfaction over the coming opportunity to pillory the defendant. Boss

Nordhoff's face wore a settled frown, for he considered the move far too daring.

The young prisoner, however, stepped to the stand briskly, his face a mask of grave assurance. He at least appeared to be thoroughly equipped for this supreme test. His story of the events leading up to the tragedy was told briefly, without prodding from Randolph, in an apparently straight-forward manner.

But soon the big lawyer halted him with a commanding gesture and put the vital question.

"Why did you shoot Mike Dennis?"

"I had heard his threats against me and I knew he carried a gun. He made a move for it, and I felt that it was his life or mine. I fired to save myself."

For the rest of the afternoon Prosecutor Dodd endeavored to shake this simple story. He was a skilled cross-examiner, and never before had he handled his verbose probe more determinedly. Again and again he hurled the charge: "Don't you know that Michael Dennis was unarmed that day?"

But just as stoutly did the defendant insist that Dennis had made the first move — that he had fired in self-defense.

Next morning Randolph played his last desperate trump by calling Snooks Madden, recommended by Cliff as being willing to "go the limit."

Snooks looked too much the typical gangster to make a prepossessing witness, although he was toned down for the occasion in a new black suit and a tie so somber that he had with difficulty recognized his own image in the glass. But he, too, was steeled to make a mighty effort for Cliff, for the gang, for the organization.

"What did you do when Mike Dennis fell?" the lawyer asked.

"Just as the cop came up on the run, I leaned over and whisked a gun out of Mike's right."

Startled by the boldness of this perjury, the prosecutor sprang to his feet and roared a protest.

"There is only one gun in this case," he insisted to the Court. "That gun Nordhoff himself carried and used."

"I don't remember that any weapon has yet been exhibited to the jury," interposed Judge Van der Water. "Where is the gun you claim that Cliff Nordhoff used?"

"The Lord only knows!" the district attorney exclaimed. "The police failed to get it. Probably it was slipped to one of his gang, which is their way of getting rid of evidence. At any rate, we've not been able to trace it."

Julian plunged into the opening offered.

"You say you whisked a gun from Michael Dennis as he fell," he observed to the witness. "Suppose you tell us what you did with it."

Madden fumbled a second in his coat pocket, then drew forth an automatic pistol of blue steel and presented it, hilt first, to the questioner.

"The missing gun of Cliff Nordhoff!" exclaimed the public prosecutor in vast indignation.

"The missing gun of Michael Dennis," corrected Julian in his mildest tone. "I now offer it in evidence as Exhibit 'A' for the defense."

"But that's Nordhoff's gun!" cried little Mr. Dodd excitedly. "That's the gun that killed Dennis."

"Prove it," suggested the lawyer imperturbably,

his gesture indicating that he had finished with the witness.

The grilling which Snooks Madden withstood that morning will long be remembered in gangdom, which is never averse to gloating over tricks successfully played on the law.

Finally Dodd gave up the attack, and, with a sign to the defense, stepped to the bench. There he made a whispered demand on Judge Van der Water that Snooks Madden be held for perjury.

The jury was sent from the room in charge of a bailiff, and the attorneys continued their discussion, Randolph putting in a stout defense of Madden's honesty. The court finally ruled against the youth, however, and, turning to him, said:

"Consider yourself under continuing subpœna in this case. Shall I send you to the House of Detention or will you wait in my chambers?"

"Am I arrested, Boss — I mean, Mr. Judge?" asked Snooks, although with no hint of fear.

"You are not, but you are needed here as a material witness," returned the Court.

"Then I reckon the chambers will hold me," was the gangster's decision. He threw the district attorney a grin, "just to show the boob there was no hard feelings," he afterward explained.

The jury returned, and the attorneys gave themselves over to the closing addresses.

Julian Randolph was nowhere so essentially master of himself as in summing up, and he talked to the twelve as perhaps he had never talked before. His eloquence waxed with the inner reminder that this was the last hurdle in the steeplechase, and he found great stimulus

in the fact that, unnecessary as was the effort, he was "taking it clean." During a pause for effect in his peroration, he mentally regretted that in the audience which hung so intensely upon his scintillating utterances there was not included a certain pair of pink-lobed ears. Yet, when he remembered some of the jumps he had taken in the trial just drawing to its close, he was glad that Lora Nelson did not attend murder hearings.

In the charge of Judge Van der Water, which followed the addresses of the attorneys, there was much to bring disquiet to the breasts of the Nordhoffs; so much, in fact, that when the jury filed out shortly before six o'clock, the brothers were gripped by a ghastly conviction that the case would go against them.

This belief was generally shared by those who had followed the trial. Randolph's daring efforts were appreciated, but the popular verdict was that the evidence had been too strong.

"Was it really Nordhoff's gun he sprung at the last minute so dramatically?" was the demand on every lip, only less insistent than the companion query: "What will the jury think about it?"

Judge Kenneth Van der Water, of Troy, had taken due care, however, that news of the prospective perjury charge and the court's decision to hold Snooks Madden should not reach the twelve with whom the vital decision rested. In case the verdict went against young Nordhoff, he wished it to stand, and appreciated that jury knowledge of a witness for the defense being held would serve as a powerful argument in asking a new trial of the higher court.

So the jury concerned itself with the former question



and thought nothing about the second, because it did not know.

But these, as well as the great question, were not to be answered that night.

CHAPTER XIX

A FORCED VERDICT

AFTER dining in a near-by restaurant, under official escort, the jury retired behind a locked and guarded door. Almost from the start their discussion was heated, to judge by sounds which issued from the room in which they were secluded.

At intervals during the evening, by means of that weird underground which reports jury deliberations even while they are under way, bulletins, unofficial but fully credited, reached the waiting crowd. The first was that the twelve stood eight for conviction and four for acquittal. Then came rumors of a six to six vote. An hour later, however, hearsay had it back at nine to three, and there it was believed to stand for a number of ballots. At midnight, still solely through the underground, the vote was declared to be seven for conviction and five for acquittal.

"We've lost, Randolph." Boss Nordhoff's lips moved stiffly to make this ghastly comment as the two met in the rear of the court-room. "The best we can hope for is a hung jury."

"Wait and see," advised the attorney, stretching out on one of the benches, with his overcoat as a pillow, to claim the sleep of exhaustion.

At seven in the morning, word came from the room of fate that the jury was ready to report. Was it to

announce a dead-lock, or had an actual verdict been reached? Those outside had no way of guessing, for the sub-wire was not charged at that early hour.

Judge Van der Water was summoned from the hotel to which he had retired at midnight. The district attorney emerged from his office in the building, where he had spent the long hours on a couch. The prisoner was brought up from the Tombs. In three-quarters of an hour the stage was set, most of the actors therein breathing hard with suspense, and few, at least of the Nordhoff faction, supported by any hope.

The jury, moving wearily from lack of sleep, filed into the box, their expressions noncommittal.

While the necessary preliminary questions and answers clogged the vital moment, Julian Randolph's glance swept the faces of the jurors. From the eyes of three he received messages. Leaning over to his client, he whispered in a tone loud enough for District Attorney Dodd to hear: "You're free, Cliff!"

"Don't be so sure," snapped back the prosecutor.

But in the same moment of his utterance, the foreman of the jury spoke the final answer.

"Not guilty!" he said. There was, however, no elation in his voice — the jury struggle had been too bitter for that and he knew that even now the doubts of some were only half removed.

"Congratulations, Justice Randolph," whispered the boss, with emotion.

"Thank you, Nordhoff."

Something about the familiarity of these three words, together with the triumphant smile that accompanied them, caused the party leader to glance sharply at his brother's benefactor.

"There'll be plenty of time later on to hear exactly how you did it," he added, with unveiled significance.

The newspapers which had made so much of the killing of Michael Dennis, and covered the trial to the last stenographic detail, at once made a determined effort to ferret out the psychology of the amazing verdict. Reporters clung like leeches to the jurymen after Judge Van der Water had thanked and dismissed them.

"Can't say a word!" said one.

"We all agreed not to tell what went on in the jury room!" replied another.

"I might get into trouble with the Court if I talked!" asserted a third.

These and similar answers at first dignified the silence of the twelve. But the reporters had been put off in that way by jurors of past cases. They persisted; they even followed the jurymen to their homes. And gradually the weaker minds succumbed, and told the detailed story of the verdict struggle. Three, it seemed, had been for acquittal from the first. In the many ballots taken they had never changed their votes. They had resisted all attempts at compromise on a degree less than the first. Declaring themselves convinced that Nordhoff had fired in self-defense, they said they would stay locked up for a month rather than vote against their conscience. In the end, to prevent a disagreement, the other jurors, some with acute reluctance, had voted with them for acquittal.

The newspaper men secured the names of the three who had swung the jury — Katz, Martin and Frater — and turned search-lights on their records. But this illumination availed the sensation-mongers nothing. They could trace no political connections, they found

not a hint that the trio had met before they were selected as jurors, and nowhere was there any record that Julian Randolph had had previous acquaintance with them.

Even the curiosity of Mark Nordhoff was aroused. Although he made it a rule not to inquire into methods when results were satisfactory, he could not resist putting a pertinent question to his lawyer. "I don't believe you trusted mere money to hold those three to the mark," he said. "Jurors bribed with cash would have weakened under that all-night strain. What sort of grip have you got on them, anyway?"

Julian returned an ambiguous smile. "Suppose you credit it to the case we made out for Cliff in open court."

Secrecy was the corner-stone of success in the sort of law which Julian had long practiced, and it was no part of his policy to satisfy curiosity, even of the man who paid the bills and profited by his endeavors. His smile softened as he thought of Katz, the stolid, stubborn German who had led in forcing the verdict. Two years previous the cobbler's father had lain on his death-bed in the Fatherland. The son wished to go home, but had not served the term in the army that is required of German-born males. Julian, through influence in consular circles, had made his visit possible without the penalty and had thereby forever won the gratitude of the house of Katz.

Martin's readiness to respond to the lawyer's call was due to a sense of obligation which no money could cancel. The retired broker acutely realized that he would have been in Sing Sing, penniless and disgraced, instead of living in idle and extremely respectable luxury on

the Drive, had not Randolph risked the up-river trip with him in as daring a piece of legal chicanery as had ever passed the authorities.

The invincible hold upon Frater was based upon a kindly act of "the shyster's" past practice. The young journeyman plumber's sister had fallen among evil companions and the lawyer had encountered her first in the Tombs, without funds for a competent defense. His innate sympathy for the hopeless and oppressed had been so aroused that, although he had nothing personal at stake, he had offered his services without hope of pecuniary reward. Young Frater had vowed never to forget.

Yet not one crumb of this bread upon the waters, which had been returned so manifold in the steadfast jury service of the trio, had dropped into even so much as a paragraph in newspaper "morgues"; so the zealous scouts of the press were deprived of a Nordhoff jury sensation. They turned, therefore, to speculation upon the fee which Randolph would receive for his successful effort. The figures which they learned "on reliable authority" and "from persons close to the brilliant attorney" savored of frenzied finance. Nordhoff's wealth was generally known, as well as the fact that he was open of hand. The estimates compared favorably with the lavish sums expended in the past by multi-millionaires who had fallen into the toils; yet not one press prophet was extravagant enough to guess the real fee, so that the news which came from Albany a few days after the end of the trial was a complete surprise.

The governor's announcement of the appointment of Julian Randolph as justice of the supreme court, to fill the vacancy caused by the lamented death of Judge

Montgomery, was almost terse. It attempted no apology for the choice, but at the same time avoided the hypocrisy of any praise of the "gilt-edged shyster."

The storm of protest which swept over the city was cyclonic, and by no means confined to the opposition party; for even among the organization leaders there were many who dared to voice disapproval. On every hand the appointment was branded as Randolph's price for saving the life of the brother of the boss. But neither the governor nor the new justice would discuss the matter.

Boss Nordhoff assumed an attitude of defiance. He would not bother even to lie about having influenced the appointment. "Nothing to say," was his answer to all questions put by the reporters, whom he finally convinced that the prospect of an early spring was the most momentous subject he could be induced to discuss.

To those within the party who found the courage to complain to him of the flagrancy of the deal, he returned a characteristic fling.

"What if Randolph *has* a shady record at the bar? The governor isn't going to run again!"

They realized that Nordhoff was himself again, prepared to maintain his rule over the entire State. He was boss, and there was none to dispute his sway.

At last, moved to express his scorn of the public for venturing to protest against an appointment of which he approved, he issued invitations, in the name of the executive committee of the organization, to a banquet "in honor of Mr. Justice Julian Randolph," and personally saw to it that the engraved summons were sent only to those to whom his signals were commands.

Thus did he eliminate the possibility of regrets that might mean sparsely filled tables.

Even Randolph was startled by a move which savored so of effrontery and hastened to the leader as soon as he heard of it. "Do you think it wise to give such a public entertainment at this time?"

"If I didn't, would I be giving it?" growled the autocrat ungraciously. "Like as not it's the only time the organization can get its money's worth giving you a feed. It'll take the sting out of this newspaper charge that your appointment was compulsory and it'll help let the governor down easy for obeying orders."

"I shrink from the idea," objected the subject of the controversy.

Nordhoff's lip curled in scorn. "My, but he's become the modest violet now that he's got what he wanted! Don't pose before me, Randolph. My tonsils won't pass it. You see, I remember how you forced my hand when I had to have you. Get out your party clothes, put on your blandest smile, and climb into the little throne-chair I've set for you. For all you know, this first banquet may be the last ever given you."

Randolph laughed at this thrust, but soon his face again grew serious. "Tell me," he demanded, "you don't mean to have your brother at the banquet?"

"Do I look like anybody's fool?" snapped the boss. "Clifford Nordhoff is out of politics for good. Don't you read your newspaper? He sailed this morning for Honduras, where they don't know a primary day from the Fourth of July."

CHAPTER XX

ABOUT THE BANQUET BOARD

A NOTABLE company of men gathered about the flowered board at Sherry's the evening of the banquet to Justice Randolph. A statesman whose eloquence was famed across the Nation, a particular star whom the organization had recently returned in triumph to the United States Senate, presided with his usual grace. At his right sat the guest of honor, his face a trifle pale, only his brilliant eyes showing the fires of intensity that burned within him.

On the senator's left was placed the governor of the State, who had come down from Albany on the theory that he owed attendance to himself, rather than from any desire to show respect to the man he had made a judge. The organization's Congressional delegation was present in full number, as were also many judges of the several courts. Interspersed along the tables were sufficient members of the bar association to assure the public that there would be no formal protest against Randolph's elevation from that august legal body. In an inconspicuous place at one end of the speakers' table slouched Boss Nordhoff, again the imperturbable one who clutched so many political destinies in his hands. His manner proclaimed that he had too many eloquent mouth-pieces and too much authority in lip-to-ear conversation to trouble with orating in public.

After the banqueters had consumed much persiflage, as well as the courses of an elaborate menu, the presiding senator introduced the governor. This official proved a didactic perorator, who, after the briefest possible reference to the guest of the evening, plunged into a lengthy recital of the personal accomplishments of his administration.

The applause which greeted the smooth-tongued Samuel Kaplan showed the relief of the diners that the State's chief executive had reached a final period. The organization attorney was famous for his after-dinner spontaneity and successfully launched a series of stories that had the merit of being new, even though they showed no undue respect for those in power.

"And now will enter the element of contrast that is so necessary to a well-rounded evening," he broached in conclusion. "Some men are born to greatness, others have it thrust upon them, still others achieve the same. I am convinced that the man whom I now wish to present belongs to all three classes. He unquestionably was born; the governor here thrust honors upon him, and to earn them he certainly achieved in the interests of his party. At any rate we can depend upon him to take himself seriously — hence the contrast between him and myself, which I have promised. Gentlemen, I introduce to you, Mr. Justice Julian Randolph, the youngest man ever elevated to the supreme court bench of the County of New York."

Three elements contributed to make Julian's reception something of an ovation. Kaplan's wit had established a prevalent good humor. Boss Nordhoff had passed command that there must be a demonstration in behalf of his protégé, The completeness of the attend-

ance and the menu had put each guest into so receptive a mood that applause to success was inevitable, no matter what its genesis. A touch of color showed in the cheeks of the new judge as he raised his tall, square-shouldered frame from his chair and gravely bowed.

"Mr. Kaplan was right when he predicted that you would find me serious to-night," he began, in a voice that carried without effort to the far corners of the room. "But the mood does not come from introspection, and is not due to any flattering estimate of myself. Rather, it springs from a youthful and sobering reverence for the high office to which the governor has seen fit to appoint me. Always have I felt sincere appreciation of the vast responsibilities of the judiciary, but they never impressed me so strongly as yesterday when I took the solemn oath of office. If I can live up to my inherent idea of those responsibilities and be worthy of the confidence reposed in me, I shall ask nothing more of the controller of human destinies."

If Robert Partland exchanged a covert smile with Nordhoff, next to whom he sat; if Mort Lewis and others of the leaders, who knew the antecedence of the appointment of which Randolph spoke so sedately, were amused in secret, their attitudes in no wise reflected the feeling of the majority of the banqueters. Although into his simple sentences Julian had thrown the last ounce of his sincerity, with convincing effect, an atmosphere of disappointment settled on the listeners because he had not prepared some sensational masterpiece of oratory.

"I take occasion to thank the State's chief executive for the opportunity which he has given me," continued the speaker. "It is one that a lawyer of my years and

attainments could scarcely have expected in the everyday list of his deserts. For that reason I shall strive all the harder to deserve it. Here and now I give the governor my promise that exact justice to the fullest extent of my understanding shall be the invariable rule of the court over which I am to preside."

If Julian realized that in his words he had literally quoted the judge from up-State, it was betrayed neither by tone nor expression. Nordhoff it was who sent a smile of bitter mockery toward the puppet who had so disappointed them by his new-found virtue — Van der Water, of Troy, seated at a distant table.

In truth, this after-dinner address was an ordeal to Julian, one of the greatest through which he would ever have to pass. He acutely realized that some of his listeners knew positively how and why he had secured the appointment. Others were doubtless shrewd enough to suspect the reason for the governor's action. To appear and speak before them with a dignity that would impress them, rather than with the effulgence expected of him, was his desire. Yet as his speech proceeded, the might of his honesty captured his unwonted diffidence, as well as their complete attention. His manner eased, expression came more naturally to his tongue and his magnetic personality began to compel the benefit of the general doubt.

His tone deepened, as briefly and with intense appreciation, he referred to the life and works of Justice Montgomery, than whom no New York jurist had ever been more generally revered. Through the departed great man as an illustration, he upraised before them an ideal; touched its several perfections here and there

with veneration; eulogized it generously as a whole, although with no extravagance.

"Not for a moment," he said, "have I forgotten that the silken garment which has fallen to me rested long upon the shoulders of so gallant and so genuine a man. No one appreciates more than I the consistent grace with which he wore it. It seemed to fit like a royal mantle every line of his figure, every decision of his brain, every kindly impulse of his heart. No just mortal could ever have disputed his absolute worthiness to wear it; no one ever considered him without it, until there sounded for him one day the call of the Greatest Judge.

"Gentlemen, I wish to wear it as he did. Presumptuous though it be, I aspire to mold myself to its form. Clumsy and inadequate now, I am determined some day to carry it with grace. With all my heart and strength and soul, you friends of the inner rule, I intend rightly to wear my robe of honor."

A moment of silence greeted his conclusion, a silence full of indignation that the notoriously fluent "shyster" should have so cheated them of the expected sensation. Then the courtesy of hosts got the better of their disapprobation and they made the walnut rafters of the banquet hall thud with punctilious hand claps.

Although he fully appreciated their reserve, Julian was content with his effort. He had surprised them, although not as they had expected, and he hoped that to some degree he had impressed them. Some day, might not this maiden effort in sincerity be referred to as consistent with his later record?

He was leaving the restaurant shortly before mid-

night when Bruce Nelson stopped him in the reception room.

"So the banquet is over?" asked the senior Traction lawyer. "I am disappointed, as I had hoped to get there for your speech, at least. I want to tell you, Justice Randolph, how pleased I am at your appointment. Accept my heartiest congratulations. We have need of men like you on the supreme court bench."

For a moment Julian looked at the veteran attorney with a curious gaze. He wondered if it was possible that a double meaning lay in Nelson's closing sentence. Consolidated Traction had needed him in the past. Did the lawyer's "we" mean that the mighty corporation expected to have need of him in his new rôle? Like a ghost of his past, there upraised before him the memory of that contract to abandon damage practice against the Consolidated, which he had signed with Partland. It brought the evening's first poignant regret.

CHAPTER XXI

THE BARS LET DOWN

PERHAPS in Randolph's moment of introspection, Bruce Nelson read what was passing in his mind, for the veteran was famed for an intuition little short of clairvoyance. Or perhaps he attributed the hesitation of the new justice to modesty over receiving such emphasized congratulations. At any rate, his countenance became even more suave as he added: "Don't be nervous about this new dignity, my young friend. You know your law up and down and across the page. You'll hold your own."

"We missed you upstairs," interposed Julian, inwardly condemning his recent suspicion as unworthy. "It was an evening I shall never forget."

"Our firm was represented, you may be sure," continued Nelson. "My failure to materialize was due to a previous engagement with my niece and Mrs. Berkeley Armistead. Of course I couldn't wriggle out of that."

"Your niece, Mr. Nelson, is excuse for any desertion."

"That's so, you know her!" exclaimed the Traction man. "We were speaking of your appointment at dinner. Won't you tarry just a minute? I am sure she will want to add her felicitations to mine."

As he spoke, the elevator door opened and the young

lady herself emerged in the midst of a chatting group. Julian had a few moments in which to note the graceful lines of her tall figure in the mauve evening gown she wore. His face showed fervid appreciation of the picture she made as she paused to bid her friends good night. At last she was free to come to them, her one hand grasping a bouquet of lavender orchids, the other cordially outstretched.

"Are you weary of congratulations, Judge Randolph?" she asked.

He bent low over her hand, the obeisance dignified by the powerful breadth of his shoulders and the manner of a great occasion that radiated from him. When he spoke, his tones had the thrill of portentousness.

"I simply couldn't be weary before receiving yours, Miss Nelson."

"Would you mind waiting for me a moment, my dear?" interrupted her uncle. "I haven't been able to find Mark Nordhoff yet, and I particularly wish to speak with him to-night. Perhaps our new dignitary will entertain you while I am gone."

"Gladly, sir. And I think you will find Mr. Nordhoff lingering in the banquet room." Julian vehemently meant the former part of this statement, and trusted to luck that the remainder of it would stand the test of investigation. The small doubt did not in any measure taint the joy with which he found his beautiful charge a seat and settled down beside her for the wait.

With only a difference in detail between a picture hat and a riding derby, Lora lifted to him the confidential look of their ride.

"I suppose you feel very triumphant?" she asked.

"Not so much triumphant as — You remember

what you said to me in the park? Well, *I* enjoy to be happy, too!"

"And this appointment has made you happy, Mr. Justice?"

His eyes darkened with the unspoken meaning of his words as he said: "The appointment is going to help make me happy. I am sure of it, for I've never been so near happiness as I have been to-night, as I am at this moment — *now*."

Greedily he watched the signs of feeling he had aroused in her, the faint color that waved across her cheek, and the effort with which she continued the conversation.

"I think there must be something back of the appointment to make you so happy," she suggested.

"There is, Miss Nelson, something back of it — but more, I hope, in front. I wonder if it is too impossibly soon to tell you —"

"What I mean," she interrupted, "is that you are happy because you feel you deserve the honor — in terms of our previous conversation, that you are *right*. From what Uncle Bruce has told me of the trial, you took your hurdles wonderfully, and took them clean. It made me glad — really very glad."

At the sincerity of her voice and eyes, those errant little scruples, which this girl alone of all his world seemed able to invoke, rushed forth to choke the pleasure from Julian's hour.

"Right and clean are definite terms," he commented uneasily.

"Not too definite for you, I hope."

In the glance she fixed upon him there was a startled quality, almost a suggestion of dread. But the

look rested unanswered on his broad shoulders, for, as though suddenly depressed, Julian had slouched forward with chin in hand to an absorbed contemplation of the floor.

A pause fell on them. It turned out to be so vital a pause that both started, when, with the faintest of sounds, Lora's bouquet fell to the floor. From his stooping position as he recovered it, Julian looked up at the girl with a moody and passionate face, then began to speak in an effortful way. But what his lips said and what his expression said were not in the same degree of intensity.

The message of his eyes might have been translated into this apostrophe: "You rare and beautiful orchid, mauve and gold-flecked . . . You soft, alluring body with your conquering mind . . . You are the one woman that I crave and fear . . . You are the love that I must have, the conscience that I must satisfy!"

His voice spoke much more guardedly.

"I hope they are not too definite for me, Miss Nelson. But I want you to make me a promise. I want you to judge me, yes; but judge me from to-night. New ideals and new mental distinctions have come to me, so new that I'd rather you'd inspect my future than my past. Won't you be thus merciful to me, for only your mercy can make me content? Won't you —"

"He wasn't up there; guess he's gone home," interrupted Bruce Nelson, whose approach they had not noticed. "Come Lora, dear, you mustn't let your stupid old mother-and-father-combined-in-an-uncle deprive you of all your beauty sleep — even though you do need it less than any other girl in Gotham!"

After the lawyer had gallantly handed his niece into

their waiting limousine and settled himself therein, he turned to say good night to the young man standing by the curb. But there was something inspirational in the atmosphere that made him pause and glance back at Lora. She sat gazing out at the third of their little party with a fascinated expression which he had never before seen on her face. He prided himself on having been a good guardian to his lovely relative because he had always striven to be young with her; so now he also focused his attention on the newly-made judge and tried to appraise him from the girl's viewpoint.

He saw a man of magnificent outline, which even the fur coat could not conceal, standing with head uncovered to the snowflakes that careened downward. But chiefly he saw an expression of face, an unashamed emotion which reminded him of the thrills of his own past youth. An unvoiced chuckle shook him.

"Come around to see us sometime," he exclaimed cordially, fumbling for the handle of the door. "My niece religiously observes Thursdays, if you care for the lurid light of pink teas, and I'm very frequently home evenings. . . . Yes, Thursdays. . . . Good night."

"Come around to see us sometime," echoed in Julian's ears more distinctly than the noise of the disappearing car, as, several seconds later, he brushed the snowflakes from his hair, replaced his hat, clasped his fur collar under his chin, and started afoot for his final goal of this momentous night — home.

"Come around to see us sometime."

Sooner than he had dared hope his social Rubicon had been crossed! No matter with what sensations of

humility she filled him, no matter how great personal improvement must needs be made in himself, he was at last on her side of the stream of convention, helped out of the muddy current into which he had early cast himself by this last, chance cordiality of her guardian.

Surely, once beside her on the other bank, he would be high enough above his recent culpability to hold her present respect! . . . Lora in lavender! A cold, vague color it was said to be . . . But when it had got so on your imagination that all other colors seemed crude beside it; when, in the space of a heart-throb, it had come to be your favorite color, how lovely it was — how rare and lovely!

A man's past — his own past did not matter much. As for his future, even this scrupulous, orchid-minded maiden of to-night — even Lora in lavender should come to be proud of that.

CHAPTER XXII

A FLY IN THE AMBER

NO attorney snatched from active practice by an over-night gubernatorial appointment ever assumed his dignity more readily than did Julian Randolph. With the ease of a chameleon did he seem to change the color of his life. To the public and to the attorneys who practiced before him he appeared to have been born again—and born to justice. All the traditions of the high office he was careful to observe, outwardly at least, with a conscientiousness that seemed inherent. No one—even former associates who knew his record as a practitioner—ventured to take liberties with the decorum of his court. His decisions, terse in words, showed a thorough knowledge of the law, and his rulings were shrewd enough to command the respect of all who appeared before him.

After the first terrific flare of public resentment which had followed his appointment to Judge Montgomery's vacant bench, there was no open challenge of his right to the office. The press, relieved by its initial scathing arraignment of boss control of the judiciary, seemed content with a watchful silence. The bar had too much reverence for the office to persecute an incumbent. Fellow members of the judiciary accepted him as one of them, perhaps partly because

others of the number owed their elevation to similar sources.

To Mr. Justice Randolph social opportunities opened that had been beyond Julian Randolph, lawyer. The Organization, and after it more exclusive clubs, let down their bars. His eligibility rose like a thermometer under a summer heat wave. His spontaneous wit, his command of the niceties of English, his inspired delivery made him more than acceptable as an after-dinner speaker. Newspapers and magazines learned to value his opinion on broad public questions. Many of his former clients looked the other way when they passed him on the street, although, in truth, they need not have feared any proudful change in the man. The compliments that came to him he accepted with a dignity which caused many to feel that they had previously misjudged him.

Nevertheless, Julian knew in his heart that he was like the leopard, that there were some spots which he had not been able to change — *not yet*. The temporary nature of his appointment was the palliation he offered himself. After the November election was safely past, when by the votes of the people he held title to his office for the full fourteen-year term, then he would show them that he really was a thoroughbred! He would prove to the world that he was an honest judge.

Meantime he proceeded to make an illustrious record for himself and build up the campaign fund which he would doubtless find essential after he had the nomination tucked away; for he felt certain that the fight of the opposition party would be centered around him. He handed down certain decisions which seemed to

favor the people, but which, at the same time, did not arouse the corporations — for their attorneys were shrewd enough to discover the jokers he had inserted, whereby they might secure reversals in the higher courts.

That he had not been able entirely to put behind him these tricks of the law was a source of keen regret to him every time he thought of Lora Nelson. Since the tearing down of the social barriers between them by her wisecrack of an uncle, he had found many opportunities of seeing the beautiful society girl. And even though the necessities of reflection, and a secret personal ambition of his own compelled him to a rôle of restraint when before her, he hoped that she understood him, that she, as well as he, was considering that intimate, future relation which he had already informed her was his ruling desire.

He had not demanded her answer. He had, in fact, curbed any expression on her part; for, knowing both her and himself, he appreciated perhaps better than she, that she was not sure of him. More insistently than he loved her, than he longed for her, than he craved to have and to hold her as a woman — as his woman — did he demand that their union should be founded on reality, on absolute knowledge, on "rightness." Any fear that he was risking her interest in some other by his delay would have seemed to belittle her; for, with a rush of blood that at times almost overpowered his continence, he realized that he might at any moment force her inclination and claim her passion.

But he wanted more than that. Inclination, fondness, passion — what were they, when weighed against the continuance of love that was grounded on respect?

To the limit of his enormous self-control, he intended to strive for the answer of her mind before that of her heart.

He eagerly awaited the nominating convention and the brief campaign which would follow, for no doubt of the result troubled him. The boss would keep his word as to the nomination, of course, and if there came protest from the voters at the polls, it would not be strong enough to overcome the normal majority of insensate puppets who balloted under the emblem of the party.

Not often in these surcharged days did Julian think of Roxana Frisbee. When he did, it was with vague uneasiness, although he felt that he had handled her with admirable kindness and skill in giving her the sort of vacation she would most appreciate, a trip to Europe as a reward for her jury planting. She had started on her somewhat precarious expedition with the unfeigned joy of a school-girl and he had heard from her at various danger-points. That his necessary break with her might be as humane as possible, he had answered a letter now and then, in a friendly but impersonal vein. It was not in Julian's nature to forget the invaluable aid she had often given when that ladder he was climbing felt shaky. He sincerely wished the bright girl a life of happiness wherever her future course might lie.

But she was projected forcibly into his remembrance one afternoon when he met Snap Comsky, his former partner, and was told of a call which the young woman had paid his quondam law office on the previous day. She had been home a week, it seemed, and had not made any effort to communicate with him. He was thankful. Certainly he must give her credit for such considera-

tion. It was tactful of her to realize that, in his new position, their old relation was impossible. Most women would have refused to see so nice a distinction.

His self-gratulations in her direction, however, came to a rude end that very evening on his return home to dress for a public dinner. Before he had crossed his own threshold he knew by the expression on the face of his devoted Japanese servant that something had gone amiss.

"What's wrong, Jube-Jube? Has that rascally West Indian valet in the apartment below stolen my laundry again? Or is it only that the yellow of your face has gone to your liver?" He put the questions jovially.

The ominous expression of the Oriental did not change, however. For answer he merely crooked one brown, loose-jointed thumb backward into the apartment.

Julian peered curiously through the warmly-lighted, picturesque foyer, but saw nothing different from the usual about its rich Turkish rugs, its many-pillowed divans and the several valuable paintings that glorified its walls. With another look at the Japanese, he strode across its width and followed the direction of the eloquent thumb into the darkened living room. Once through its glass doors, he halted in surprise, for a woman arose from the tapestried chair in a far corner and advanced into the shaft of light from the foyer to greet him.

His involuntary gasp was more than surprise, for the effect she made was delightful to the eye. Strikingly brunette, with the gleam of black eyes, the flush of creamy cheeks, the full-blooded tinge of lips vivified

by the moment's zest, she stood smiling before him, a revelation of what Paris could do for a business woman. Her low-cut gown was gold-colored and a huge crimson rose lay splashed against her corsage.

"Roxana!" cried Julian. "Why are you here?"

"Time enough for whys, later. In the meantime, aren't you glad to see me?" She continued to stand quite still, smiling that red-lipped smile at him.

Julian gazed at her uneasily. "I'd be something more or less than a man, if I weren't glad to see as pretty a creature as you are to-night. Europe has agreed with your looks, although, I fear, not with your discretion."

"Meaning just what, Julian?"

"Meaning that if Paris has taught you to invade bachelor apartments unchaperoned, you should forget the tutelage back in New York. You should not have come here, Roxy."

"Dear me, how careful he has grown," murmured the young woman, "that he cannot even say howdy-do to his nearest and once his dearest friend! Since the mountain won't come to Mahomet —"

With an enticing laugh, she suddenly moved to his side, slipped her arms up and up about his neck and lifted a flushed, tremulous face toward his. But Julian shrank from her display of feeling with the repulsion bred in even the most advanced of modern men — strong from predatory male ancestors who had been dictators of love and from females who had gloried in their dictation — toward the woman who urges her lips. Catching the bare, quivering members, he slid his hands along them until he broke the hold of her hands. Then, gently, he pressed a kiss upon her finger-

tips. He led her to a chair in the light, and, with a grave face, sat down beside her.

"You should not have compromised either yourself or me by coming here to-night, Roxana."

"You need not worry so. Not a soul will know I've been here — except Robert Partland. He telephoned that he wouldn't be able to drop in for you. Jube-Jube did not seem to hear the call, so I answered it."

"You talked to Partland from here?"

"And why not? I've answered many a call for you before."

"You should not have come at all, girl," Julian repeated with a decidedly perturbed expression. "You know I have never permitted it and you cannot plead sudden impulse, because you have been back a week without wishing to see me."

"Surely you are not troubled about my good name, Julian? It is quite too late in our acquaintance for you to consider that. Don't you realize yet that your past use of me has given me the power to say and do just as I like? If you don't, I'm going to help you do so to-night and the first lesson is — don't ever dare speak to me reprovingly again!"

With a flame of anger scorching all her gentleness, Roxana Frisbee got to her feet and stood over him with unveiled menace.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE SHADOW OF A DOUBT

“**I** AM here to-night, Julian, to tell you that I’m tired of being the under dog,” Roxana continued. “My vacation from your influence has given me a new point of view, and my future has got to go more to my liking than my past has done. You used to seem to love me and I hoped that you would do me justice because of that. But if you won’t — and you seem to be bent on proving that you won’t — why, you’ve got to do it, anyway!”

“Justice to what extent, Roxana?”

The man looked up into the piquant, furious face more as though wearied than intimidated.

“To the extent of marrying me — to-night, to-morrow, or any other near date that you may set.”

As he continued to watch her, Julian saw the doubt that lurked close behind the bravado of her statement. Feeling that the girl must still be fond of him, he was not afraid. She would not harm him until she hated him; and he would take care that she should never do that.

But a vast regret arose in him that he must hurt so devoted and so lovely a friend. While he had never sought her favors, he remembered the prodigality with which she had heaped them upon him and the bright companionship of their past. He was filled with only

censure for his weakness in accepting, and profound grief over the humiliation to which he must now submit her.

"Little Roxana," he began, then paused to shake his head in self-disapproval and draw a sincere, deep sigh. "I am ashamed, deeply ashamed, of the way I have treated you. You are such a dear girl, and have been so kind to me that I should grant anything you ask that would better your life. But this one thing would be only the beginning of misery to you. I had hoped that you were becoming interested in — in some one else."

"If I must be miserable, I prefer to choose my own way — and my own man," she interrupted.

"But, child, you are choosing the worst way and the very worst man for yourself. They would shackle you to wretchedness for life. Do you still care for me, Roxy?"

He regretted the question and despised himself for putting it when he saw the gleam that suddenly lighted her eyes.

"You know how much, Julian."

"Then maybe you can forgive my seeming brutality when I say that I don't care for you as I did. I have done you an irreparable wrong by my weakness in the past, due never to intention. I'll do anything — *anything* — for you by way of righting it, but marriage would only make it worse."

"I don't see —" murmured she in a low, defiant voice.

He felt her hand stiffen within his and noted the protective droop of her head.

"You cannot help seeing. I fear, I sadly fear, Roxana, that my present deep friendship for you would quickly alter to something less pleasant if I married

you, and, because of you, gave up all my ambitions. I have changed very materially from the Julian you used to know. I want to be fine in my private life as well as in that which is spread before the public. And I must have the social recognition and public respect that prove such living. I cannot be happy unless I have them. If you really do care, little pal, you should want me to be happy. I'll always be your grateful friend, and I'll give you any material help you want. But to give my career and my chance of happiness in exchange for my debt to you — Roxana, as a mortal, selfish man I cannot do it!"

She snatched her hand away.

"You can't be entirely honest with anybody, can you, you natural-born shyster?" she sneered, although two hot tears raced erratically down her cheeks.

He flung her the most troubled look of their interview.

"Don't say that!" There was real pain in his voice.

"Your tricks are clever," she went on, "but you could not deceive any real woman for long. She'd soon find out that you were not quite true to anything except your schemes."

"You don't really think that?" implored Julian, disturbed to the heart by the accusation.

"Let me show you your present stupidity, for instance." Miss Frisbee seemed suddenly to have regained command of herself, and spoke with an air of considerable authority. "If you had said what you have to me to-night, *plus* the admission that you are in love with, and ambitious to marry, another woman, your predicament might have touched my pity."

"But, Roxana —"

"Please don't contradict me, or try to excuse yourself. That would be quite too crass. You inform me that I have been in town a week. So I have. And in that week I have busied myself taking stock of your entire situation, judicial, political *and* personal. I have read of your recent visits to the Long Island country place of a certain society girl, whom, for the sake of convenience, we shall call 'The Wraith.' I have noted the press comments on the probability of your engagement to this same embodied spirit, based on the frequency of your appearance with her on horseback at Hempstead. I have seen —"

"That is enough!" cried Julian imperiously, striding across the room to face her. "I have no right to discuss this matter with you or any one else. I cannot prevent the newspapers from being sacrilegious, but I can and will prevent you! You have forced my statement of to-night and there is plenty of cause for it, in the fact that I am trying to live down my past, that I am —"

Roxana again interrupted. "That you are trying to enter the inner circle through a paragon."

"If you are again referring to Miss Nelson, Roxana, she is the most exquisite-minded creature I have ever known."

"Exquisite-minded — what is that?" scoffed the girl. "She would never satisfy you. What is she of herself except a spender? What has she ever done but let other people work for her? She'd last about as long with a red-blooded crook like you as —"

"I shall have to bid you good-night at once, unless this wildness ceases," interposed Julian, so quietly but firmly that his unwelcome guest stopped to listen.

"You show the limitations of your experience with women when you pin your admiration to only one type, the militant, cock-sure sort. There are less flagrant, more seductive ways of being a powerful woman. Quite as much strength is needed to keep out of unworthy entanglements as to get out of them, once in."

A pitiful wistfulness lit Roxana's face. "I suppose you're right," she said.

"You know I am, dear child. As for my future, I am unalterably determined to rise to the best that is in me. I have become a justice and —"

"Do you feel that you are cultivating this innate greatness by turning against the most valued friend of your past?" queried the girl with sarcasm. "The fact that you are a judge is no reason why you should not marry me. If you prefer, however, it can wait a little longer, until after your remnant term is ended and you go back to practice."

"You show that you do not understand me at all. I am not to go back to the practice of law. I'm to have the nomination for the full fourteen-year term. With the organization behind me, there isn't a shadow of doubt of my election."

"The party nomination? The organization behind you?" The hard laugh of the woman scorned hurt his ears. "Honestly, Julian, for a man as keen as you are at many things, you are pretty credulous when it comes to politics!"

"You are talking at random," he said calmly.

"At random, am I? I'm talking straight to the point. You are dreaming, if you think they intend to give you the party nomination this Fall. There is as much chance of their giving it to me."

Her air of conviction and his experience of her astuteness caused him to regard her more closely. "You ought to know the folly of trying insinuations with me, Roxana."

She smiled again derisively.

"I am not insinuating, poor fool. That you were to be ditched in this fourteen-year-term dream was one of the first facts I learned when I began to inquire about you. As I told you before, Marcus Nordhoff is not schooled in gratitude."

Julian assumed an air of confidence he was far from feeling. "You will pardon me, if I say that I don't believe you."

"Then ask him! Or, if you don't care to go to him, ask your friend, Bruce Nelson. He knows and is already wondering how he can snub the affair between you and his niece. Or ask shuffling Robert Partland. He is sorry, for he expected to make you a Traction judge. Why, even ask Snap Comsky, who has heard the news over the grape-vine, and is worried. He's afraid you'll demand your practice back or that —"

Julian snapped his fingers with elaborate scorn. "Comsky always was nervous that he wasn't going to get everything in sight. And as for politics, why, he doesn't know any more about the game than Jube-Jube!"

"Then go to somebody who does. Take my second suggestion and consult dear Uncle Bruce," retorted she. "You can't deny that that old fox knows politics. But you might just as well save yourself unnecessary humiliation and take my word for it, because I know — Boss Nordhoff! And you know me, friend Julian, so don't try to make light of what I've told you. And

don't take it too much to heart. Every man is a fool at sometime in his life. It is fortunate for me that your time is the present."

Still smiling at him in a way that assured him of her definite knowledge, even as it unmercifully triumphed over him, Miss Frisbee walked to an electric button in the wall and vigorously pressed it.

"Get me a taxi," she ordered Jube-Jube, who answered. Then she turned back for her farewell admonition, delivering it in a luscious tone. "Think it over, dear. You have much wisdom back of your present folly and I have decided to wait a little longer for your decision. You will positively need me again in your business after your remnant of a term is ended."

When he was alone, Julian sank into a chair and gave himself to the full force of his doubt. Too well he knew the girl's weird faculty of discovering the truth. If what she had said was true, if all his world had been laughing at him, while he had been doing the most conscientious service of his life, living on in the hope of soon being all that he seemed to be — if Marcus Nordhoff was to go back on his bargain and make the savior of his brother and his own career a public joke — well, Julian Randolph had shown some retaliative powers even when a lawyer; now that he was a justice of the supreme court, there were things he could do!

As a man with his fight to fight and his woman to win, there *must* be things he could do. If he was a man, surely he would rise to the issue and see what things they were. If he was what he had always assumed himself to be, the man the public had always declared him, he could not be beaten so dismally just at the start of his new life.

Maybe he had been cruel to the Frisbee girl; maybe his better self had lain dormant for years; maybe he had not always been true to its promptings since it had awakened; maybe he was not to-day fit to ask the hand of an idealist like Lora Nelson in marriage. But at least he was as good as the man who was trying to strip him; indeed, he would prove he was better by worsting him.

Caught in a primitive rage against any power that would dare block the course of his career, against any past mistake that would dare mar the joys of his future, torn by appetentiary impulses of protection, Julian Randolph arose and began to pace off the yards, feet and inches of his luxurious suite. He entirely forgot the dinner he was to attend, for, as though in emulation of his physical activity, his scheming mind got under motion with his steps. The faster he paced, the more facile became its workings. Long after his body was so weary that he had laid it down for rest, his mind was speeding into the impossible, out-distancing his remorse, searching for those things that he could do.

CHAPTER XXIV.

IN THE WHITE BOOKLET

JUSTICE JULIAN RANDOLPH had no intention of acting upon mere suspicion, but he was not many hours in ascertaining the truth. The hint from the angry lips of Roxana Frisbee that he was to be forgotten when the chiefs of the organization party made up the judicial slate was, through guarded inquiries, fully confirmed. Once more the girl had shown an intimate knowledge of affairs that might naturally have been considered beyond her scope.

Randolph faced the first grave danger of his judicial career, but his determination to put his will against that of the political autocrat and rescue the promised nomination remained absolute. He set about the achievement with directness, his spirit wroth and daring.

On quitting private practice for the bench, Julian had rented a compartment in a safe-deposit vault and placed therein a number of interesting documents. These, his "life preservers," he stored with great care against the eventualities of office holding, which his foresight had predicted was certain to have their stormy periods.

So that now, in searching for a weapon which he might use effectively upon the boss, his mind reverted to this strong-box. In it, he knew there lay a particu-

lar paper which he had secured from Clifford Nordhoff during their preparation for the murder trial, one which he had taken pains not to return when that young man had been duly acquitted.

His work on the bench over for the day, and court adjourned, Julian repaired to the vaults and soon sifted out the document he desired. Returning to his chambers, he left word with his clerk that under no circumstances was he to be disturbed.

From a worn envelope he drew forth a booklet bound with white ribbon. On its cover was represented a pudgy Cupid seemingly resting from the exertion of just having shot his dart toward a pair of hearts on the opposite margin. On the second page was the stereotyped injunction: "Those whom God hath joined together let no man put asunder." The third was embellished with a bit of sentimental verse. "Certificate of Marriage" was the superfluous inscription which prefaced this work of art. Julian recognized the pamphlet as the species of proof which country ministers and justices of the peace present to the bride when the fee has demonstrated satisfactory proportions.

Impatiently he turned to the page which held his especial interest, and upon the skillful handling of which might depend his continuance in the judiciary. The script there read:

"This is to certify that I, Hiram Conover, justice of the peace, in and for the Town of Hackensack, on this the twenty-sixth day of June, —, united in marriage under the laws of the State of New Jersey, Clifford Nordhoff and May Morrison, whose signatures appear below."

In the busy days immediately preceding the Nordhoff trial the lawyer had given this document but scant attention. Beyond satisfying himself that the "Clifford Nordhoff" signature was unmistakably in the hand of his client's elder brother, he had not gone into the delicate situation. On Cliff's assurance that Detective Bouker was the only person likely to bring the vicarious heart transaction to the attention of the district attorney, he had been content to get that worthy temporarily out of the jurisdiction.

But under the developments of the past few hours this certificate of marriage had taken on vital import. He indulged in a momentary frown for his previous neglect of it and turned to a memorandum which had been prepared by one of his former law clerks and filed with the certificate.

It appeared that Marcus Nordhoff's legal marriage had taken place several years before the bigamous one in which, obviously for future protection, he had used the name of his brother. Both before and after the second marriage he had lived openly with his real wife in New York. So far as the clerk had been able to ascertain, there had been no subsequent legal action in the matter.

So much for the identity and circumstance of the man named in the booklet. Regarding the woman, the memorandum was not satisfactory. The mysterious May Morrison seemed to have dropped from sight. Justice of the Peace Conover remembered the ceremony because of the generosity of the fee. The bride, according to his best recollection, was a slight, pretty brunette, much younger than the groom.

"To make this really effective, I've got to locate one

May Morrison," mused Randolph, laying down the clerk's notation.

As he returned to study of the certificate, the line "whose signatures appear below" particularly held his attention, and he began to scrutinize the feminine scrawl. Even at first glance there seemed something vaguely familiar about it. Continued inspection brought an electrifying suspicion.

"It isn't possible!" he exclaimed.

Unlocking a drawer of his desk, he abstracted an envelope bearing a foreign post-mark. Only a moment was needed to uncover the last page and its erratically signed "Roxana." Eagerly he compared this with the "May Morrison" of the certificate. His look of amazement increased as suspicion grew into conviction. No two women had ever accomplished a chirography so distinctive.

Only for a moment did surprise hold him. Then he gave up his mind to exultation. So accurately did this discovery fit into his purpose that it seemed too good to be true. Was it possible that chance had just thrown into his hands the solution of the two great difficulties of his life—the clearing away of his obligations to the other woman and the assurance of his nomination for the full term?

Again he studied the signatures assiduously. Even his untrained eye discovered a dozen peculiarities in common.

And the country justice of the peace had remembered the bride as a slight, pretty brunette!

He recalled now the strange antipathy which the Frisbee girl had shown several times toward Boss Nordhoff and that demonstration of fear on his own

behalf which he had been unable to explain at the time. He remembered how she had begged him not to go to Nordhoff on the occasion of the important telephone message and the peculiar insistence of her warning. And how eccentric had been her behavior that day at Hahn's after she had learned that it was the Cliff Nordhoff jury which she was to plant with Randolph's secret benchmen! To his superb memory forcefully recurred her statement that Cliff was suffering for his brother's crimes.

So this was the strange little creature's life secret! He had always suspected that she had one, without having even an intimation of its nature.

"Poor girl! She was pathetically young then," he mused. "It was hard luck to start life as Boss Nordhoff's victim."

Gradually there grew in him wonder over why she had suffered in silence all these years. If she had been unsophisticated then, she was an especially wise woman now. Bringing the party boss to time for an illegal marriage would have been a case to revel in, and Roxana must have known through those years during which she had served the firm for hire that a word to her employers would have brought her full meed of legal satisfaction. Having been over the matrimonial hurdle with a man of Nordhoff's wealth and prominence, she need never have earned a salary from Randolph & Comsky. The mere fact that the boss had committed a crime in pretending to marry her under the shield of his brother's name would have made her support more certain and more generous.

Yet she had hidden her identity under an assumed name, had slaved at tasks that must have been exceed-

ingly distasteful, had taken enormous risks on the witness stand, had endured deprivations, allowing the man who had sinned against her to go his way of respectability. "Why?" the jurist asked himself.

Certainly it was not because she was still in love with Nordhoff. Of that Julian felt convinced from the several times he had seen, without understanding, her flashes of malignant hatred for the man, and her fear of his power.

Against his will, the solution of Roxana Frisbee's attitude came to him who had so inadvertently uncovered her pitiful history.

"It must be — she really must have cared for me," he mused. "She gave up the luxuries she might have had and kept silence all these years in the hope that some day I'd make good her expectations. What a despicable part I have played! How far astray from the course of a man I have let myself drift!"

With innate thoroughness he gave himself up to self-condemnation, then to sympathy for the unfortunate young woman who had been so much to him in so many ways; emotions of deep and lasting sincerity. Unwelcome as it was, that harassment of his debt to her returned in full force. At least he could see to it that her material future was provided for by Nordhoff! That much he definitely decided to force, whether he got the nomination or not.

He wrote Roxana a brief note, asking that she call at his chambers at four o'clock the following afternoon, "for a peek behind judicial scenes," he said.

Toward Nordhoff he made no move until the next day, when, during the luncheon hour, he reached the party leader on the telephone and requested that he

drop in at chambers at four-fifteen, saying that he had information of vital interest to the organization.

The boss demurred at first over the trip downtown and suggested a later meeting at his club. On Justice Randolph's insistence, however, that his judicial obligations would not permit him to come uptown, he at last grudgingly assented.

"If he's got a hint of what's coming off about his nomination," the politician admonished himself, "I might as well have it out with him now as later."

CHAPTER XXV

TURNING THE SCREWS

CLAD in a blue walking suit which proclaimed the art of some master tailor and set off every line of her petite figure, Roxana Frisbee, with her usual punctuality, was ushered into Justice Randolph's chambers at the appointed hour.

"Those weeks abroad certainly did improve you," Julian began pleasantly, "or rather you certainly improved them. That costume —"

"I bought this suit in New York after I got back. But you didn't send for me to discuss my clothes," she interrupted, somewhat tartly. "To just what am I indebted for this unexpected attention?"

"Am I not to show a friendly interest in you?" he pursued. "Your eyes always see motives from a unique angle."

"Drop the mask, Julian!" she insisted. "Isn't it because your recent inquiries have convinced you that I was telling the truth about Boss Nordhoff's plan to ditch you for the nomination? Haven't you sent for me because you again find you need me?"

For a moment he mistrusted the dramatics of the scene he hoped shortly to stage. The girl was almost too shrewd, even for the stellar rôle in which he had cast her.

"The probable double-dealing of Marcus Nordhoff is the least of my troubles," he assured her.

"I trust you haven't stumbled on some of the uneven places in the course of true love," she observed with a hardening of expression. "Surely even Julian Randolph wouldn't turn to me for sympathy in that dilemma?"

But as he persisted in the easier course of refusing to be serious, she skillfully fell back to play a waiting game, sensing the folly of any attempt to force his hand and confident that the real reason he had sent for her would evolve in good time. She plunged into descriptions of the pleasures and dangers she had experienced abroad, to which Julian was able to listen with real interest, despite the matter that portended.

A knock at the door of the chambers soon interrupted her, however, followed by the entrance of Julian's clerk, who placed a card before him without comment.

"I wonder if you'd mind waiting a very few minutes in my inner office, Roxana?" he asked, opening a door which led through a short passage into a smaller room. "There is a man outside on a brief matter of business who can't very well be put off."

His manner was so natural, he was so much like the old Julian she knew, that she left the room without demur. "Don't let him be too long-winded, my friend," she smiled. It seemed only habit that made the Justice close both doors after him.

Still grumpy because Randolph had sent for him instead of coming to him, Boss Nordhoff entered with heavy tread and dropped into the big chair which Miss Frisbee had vacated.

"You judges are getting to be the limit, Randolph,"

he complained. "You seem to think there is nothing in the world quite so important as writing dry opinions for the *Law Journal* to print and the appellate judges to reverse."

"Sorry I had to bring you downtown," returned Julian blandly, "but it seemed to me that this matter couldn't wait. Have a cigar?"

"Not a smoke, thank you. The doctor has cut me down to one a day. Heart's been playing capers lately. What you got on your chest?"

"Another election is not very far distant, Mr. Nordhoff."

"Right you are."

"And before election," pursued the younger man more deliberately, "you are to make some nominations."

"We're used to that—to making nominations," fenced the boss, settling heavily back into his chair, by way of preparation for the clash which he now perceived to be at hand.

"It has become something of a habit, has it?"

"Sure! Just like electing them after nomination."

"Do you remember the terms under which I undertook the defense of your brother?" Julian spoke with a sudden directness.

"I remember your hold-up," returned Nordhoff, a metallic quality entering his voice. "You got your judgeship, didn't you?"

"There was something more."

"Eh? What?" The boss grunted the monosyllables with assumed blankness.

"I was to have the party nomination for the full term."

"Well, the nominations won't be pulled off until next week." The politician looked out of the window across the park.

Julian concentrated his gaze full upon his visitor. "I have reason to believe that my name is to be left off the ticket. I merely wanted to jog your memory."

"My memory hasn't got anything to do with it." The leader's face puckered with derision. "I don't make the nominations."

"But there is one you are going to make, Nordhoff, one promise you are going to keep."

"Say, Judge—" There was unmistakable scorn in the way the leader voiced the title—"you haven't got my family on the hip now as you had earlier in the year. It's just as well for you to be reminded that you can't *make* me do anything."

"Yet there is one promise I think you will keep." Julian uttered this statement so quietly that the other lurched his big figure forward in the chair and took a fresh look at the younger man.

"Huh?" he snorted. "Bullying, eh? Well, let me tell you that the Nordhoffs will take good care never again to get mixed up with first degree cases. And I'd just like to add that I wouldn't have you nominated for poundkeeper after the way you forced my hand when we were up against it."

Julian eyed him interestedly. "Think it over just a minute, Mr. Nordhoff. Let your mind run over your own past. Isn't it possible that you may be up against it to-day — now?"

"You haven't got anything on me, and I don't want any more talk," roared the boss, lumbering to his feet with as much physical decision as he could command.

"Then I'll have to do what it would seem you're going to make me do," inserted Julian.

"Don't threaten me, you grafting, fill-in judgelet!" Nordhoff started toward the door, thoroughly incensed.

"Wait a minute!"

The quiet command halted him.

Already Randolph had covered the few feet between his desk and the inner door. He disappeared for a moment, then ushered in his other guest.

"Come in, Roxana," he said, gallantly stepping aside.

At the words, the boss started and turned toward the open door. When his eyes encountered the young woman who tripped lightly into the room, he made an odd, gasping sound, then clutched uncertainly for the support of the heavy chair back.

The new-comer's astonishment was complete. With her first glance at the choleric-looking individual beside Julian's desk all color left her face. As quickly, it flared back again. In a fury she turned upon the man who had trapped her.

"You heartless fiend!" she cried. "I could never have believed this, even of you!"

"I see that it is unnecessary to introduce you two," commented Julian, with his most genial manner. "Do be seated and have your little family conference in comfort." He resumed his chair behind the desk.

But the boss and the woman did not seem to hear him. They stood looking at each other, both too perturbed for speech.

"I — I thought you were dead," Nordhoff stammered at last. "They told me you were. I — I never heard anything from you."

"To nearly all intents and purposes May Morrison is dead," Julian inserted coldly. "Permit me to present to you Miss Roxana Frisbee, who rendered such efficient aid in preparing the defense of your brother."

A surge of hope filled the big politician. Perhaps this legal sharp hadn't found him out, after all! Possibly he intended to make another play on the murder defense. Inwardly he cursed his first incautious words, amounting to admission. But mayhap they had not been noted.

"I don't care a rap, Randolph, how you won Cliff's case," he asserted as boldly as possible in view of his inward agitation. "If there was crooked work in it, the funeral isn't mine and you can't threaten me with it. The law says you can't put a man twice in jeopardy of his life, and one jury has said that Cliff is not guilty."

"But we've graduated from the murder case," was Julian's bland return. "There are other crimes mentioned in the code for which the penalty is troublesome enough to a man in your position."

Not for a moment through this preface had Roxana doubted Randolph's absolute knowledge. "You knew all the time?" she demanded of him.

"It is sufficient that I know now," he returned.

"Keep still, young woman, before this shark!" interrupted Nordhoff uneasily. "I'll take care of you."

"Indeed, that is one of the things you are going to do," agreed Julian positively, "though why you admonish her to keep silent —"

"Why should I speak?" Roxana addressed Julian, aglow with anger. "Why should I help you gain further honors to lay at the feet of another woman?"

Again the boss felt a tingle of hope. "Yes, why should she?" he echoed belligerently.

"It will not be necessary for her to speak," returned Julian, and took the marriage certificate out of the drawer. "There is a justice of the peace over in Hackensack who remembers marrying a man who called himself Clifford Nordhoff to a certain pretty girl named May Morrison. And even if he should forget, there is evidence enough in the signatures of this interesting little document I hold."

"My certificate!" cried Roxana Frisbee. "He — he stole it from me."

"This is the rawest kind of blackmail," roared Nordhoff, his face scarlet.

"And the crime you committed at Hackensack was the rawest sort of bigamy," returned Randolph in a voice ominously mild.

"You can't prove it in court; my name isn't signed to it," was the politician's desperate retort.

"But your brother's is," reminded Julian. "Between Conover to identify you and Detective Bouker to prove Cliff's connivance, the case is conclusive. It will be easy."

As the boss thought of the legal wife who loved him and the growing family who looked up to him, he knew that he had lost. He would never—not for all the judgeships on the ticket — let such a case go into court!

"Either I get the nomination as you promised last winter," Randolph continued in his dispassionate manner, "or you draw the penitentiary on Blackwell's Island for at least a year. And they won't give you a bay window cell, as they did Boss Tweed, either!"

One of the secrets of Marcus Nordhoff's success in

the life-game was that he knew when to lay down his hand. He now realized that Randolph, in dealing this seemingly forgotten chapter of his past, had topped him. Breathing hard, he collapsed into a chair.

"You win," he finally admitted.

"I told you that I hated to resort to such weapons," temporized Justice Randolph, "but you left me no choice. Now, what will be an equitable provision for the future of this young lady, Roxana May Morrison? I assure you that she has had no hand in this uncovering, that in all her dealings with me she has never hinted at the true relationship between you."

"I don't want your money, Nordhoff. I know where I can get plenty that's cleaner than yours," spoke up the Frisbee woman with acrid deliberation. "There is no price for a wrong such as you did me. You ruined my life in its outset by a criminal deception, and my only hope so far as you are concerned is that I shall never prove how much I hate you. A weakness of mine spared you after I had found out. Oh, not a weakness for you!" she added hastily, as she saw the crafty look that this statement brought at once into the politician's face. "A weakness for another man whom I thought worth living a lie to hold. I've made my living so far and I guess —"

"And I guess you'll be a sensible girl and take it easy the rest of the way," interrupted the boss, his better instincts rising to the occasion, since there was nothing to be gained by drowning them. "If I had known you were alive, a settlement would have been made willingly long ago. I have daughters of my own now, through whom I have learned to be sorry for the past. Come, little May, let me prove it."

The monthly settlement he offered was generous.

"You look mighty fetching in those expensive togs, Roxana," encouraged Julian. "You were built for luxuries."

"The other source of money I spoke of is man-encumbered," admitted the girl. As though moved partly by obstinate hope and partly by hard practicality, she finally consented to the provision.

"There will be the devil's own row in the party when I insist on your nomination, Randolph," commented the boss ruefully, on departure. "Still, I reckon I can put it over."

"I reckon you can!" returned Justice Randolph with frank significance.

The autocrat always bowed to the inevitable, even when it spelled his defeat. Grinning satirically at Fate, as represented by Julian Randolph, he departed.

"I am truly sorry for you," said Julian when he and Roxana were alone. "But you must acknowledge that the score between us has been evened by your years of deception."

"You know you don't think that," she asserted. "Was there no other way than to trick me into this cruel scene?"

Julian stirred uneasily. "I disliked to do it. But I think it was for the best. At least it has provided you with the creature comforts for the rest of your life."

As he paused a moment at the door after her exit, he wondered whether there was portent in the fact that she had not said good-by. His inner mind demanded to know whether, after all, he had any right to expect her to say good-by.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE PEOPLE'S JUDGE

EVERY ounce of power that Boss Nordhoff possessed, the heaviest lash of the whip he cracked, was required to persuade the nominating committee of the party that Julian Randolph should be named for the supreme court vacancy on the organization ticket.

Such workers as were distinguished members of the bar brought against the applicant his lack of good repute when one of them. Professional politicians protested that he was not sufficiently dyed in the wool of their policy to be trusted to do their bidding after election. Intimates of the boss reminded him that but a few weeks before he had laughed at "the shyster's" presumptions. In vain they cast about for the reason behind their leader's change of front. Nordhoff was consistently uncommunicative. "Julian Randolph gets the judgeship!" was his ultimatum. And, since he was a real boss, so it was written on the ticket.

The campaign which followed was a bitter one, with Randolph the center of the storm. The orators of the opposition party raked his earlier record and made the most of its shortcomings. Suspicions that the Nordhoff murder verdict had been won by fraud were now nightly voiced by cart-tail orators.

Even the cartoonists, who usually overlooked judicial candidates, pictured the aspirant vividly. One showed him as the man who would certainly get the votes of the

horde who ought to be in Sing Sing. Another paraded him at the head of an army of street-car damage grafters. A third had him presiding over a bargain counter of supreme court decisions.

Personally, the subject of these efforts held aloof from active participation in the campaign. His appearance on the platform would only have aroused antagonism, and he had the excuse of his judicial office for remaining in the background. In the secret counsels of the campaign committee, however, he offered many suggestions of value and proved himself a practical politician by the generosity of his contribution to their "war chest." The opinion of many of the leaders changed toward him, and they began to believe, that, after all, he might prove a justice pliable to the party's best interests.

On the November day when the ballots were cast, Julian ran behind the ticket, but he was elected by a comfortable number of thousands. The rank and file of the organization, the unthinking crowd which so often made it the ruling power in the metropolis, had voted the ticket straight, Randolph included. The cutting that was done came from the pencils of thinkers, of whom there were not enough to affect the result.

That he was the tailender of the winning candidates of his party did not bring Julian even a tremor of chagrin. He had expected, therefore discounted, that. The important point was that he had been elected, that for fourteen years nothing but death or the grossest misbehavior could depose him from the high office.

It was with a feeling of vast relief after election that he contemplated this fact. Since the day he had determined to mend his legal ways for the sake of becoming

the right man for the woman he loved, he had to fight against mighty odds. On the whole, he felt no shame over the fight he had made, although he did not like to think of some of the weapons used. Again necessity was his excuse. He had taken most desperate chances, prostituting justice in the Nordhoff murder case and blackmailing his nomination; but he had brought every issue to success.

Now, at last, he had his opportunity, the longed-for opportunity to show that he could be as unflinching as equally as daring, fully as uncompromising on the side of what was right! An inner thrill seized him as he realized that the probity which he had originally desired for the sake of another, he now demanded for his own sake.

"Exact justice!" The words of the refractory judge from up-State recurred to him as he mused over the possibilities of the full term. Exact justice that was what he would show henceforth. Even if it cost one woman and his expanding conscience combined, he could ask no more of him.

The occasion for his first demonstration against election fraud was not long in arriving, for, almost before the election returns had been fully canvassed, the party called upon him. It transpired that some of the workers of the organization, the hireling braves, had been careless on election day. They had voted too often, and showed a lack of caution in moving their squads of repeaters reported from Philadelphia. On the other hand, reform watchers had been perniciously active, and the detectives of the opposition exceedingly alert.

The most striking election fraud case of the season, which reform was prepared to push had resulted in

indictment of one "Skinny" Priest for fraudulent registration, and the encouragement of the crime in others, as well as for illegal voting and its instigation. Skinny, it seemed, had handled a squad of five negroes, voting them in various sections of the city, paying them fifty cents every time they successfully faced an election board, and had been caught at the trick red-handed. In addition to this embarrassment, several of the imported voters had confessed. There was not a chance for Skinny to beat the case before a jury, and it was with no complacency that he faced the prospect of five years "up-the-river."

Now, personally, Skinny Priest was of no particular importance to the leaders of the party. None of them would have donned mourning bands had he been given a limit sentence, despite the fact that he came from a respectable family, and that his only previous troubles with the law had grown from an exaggerated sense of loyalty to the organization. In this particular instance, however, the case of Skinny took on significance from the fact that he had been directly incited to his election-day activity by Mort Lewis, one of the commissioners designated by the State to see that the purity of the ballot be preserved. There was every danger that, unless young Priest got off lightly for his personal crimes, he would "snitch"—tell what he knew about the commissioner, who was Boss Nordhoff's right hand, the man who had offered his farm as Cliff's refuge.

A council of the leaders, having reviewed this phase of the case, decided that Skinny must be saved. A suspended sentence would not make his nights sleepless, and would close his lips regarding the prompting of Lewis.

This settled, they cast about for a judge to administer the sugar-coated pill of punishment. Why not Justice Julian Randolph? The suggestion came from several, and met with no objection from any. Surely no one owed the party more than this former "shyster" whom it had so elevated because of the emergencies of the boss! They did not even bother to discuss the matter with Randolph beforehand, so prevalent was the idea that he would be more than glad to show his appreciation. The calendar was duly manipulated, so that Skinny Priest went to trial in Randolph's branch of the court, and not until the night before the case was to go to the jury did they broach the matter of a mild sentence to the justice himself.

He had chanced to drop in at the Organization Club that evening on one of his rare visits since the campaign rush had ended. His coming was not so much from inclination as from the fact that one of his fellow judges at luncheon that day had chided him for his aloofness.

Aimlessly he wandered through the great rooms on the ground floor, receiving congratulations here and there from members who had not seen him since his election. He glanced at the groups about the marble-topped tables of the buffet room, refusing an invitation to join a convivial crowd at one. He allowed a "straight tip" on a prospective stock market fluctuation to enter one ear and exit from the other as soon as offered by an obsequious broker who traded on an acquaintance with Gotham personages. He was about to take his departure when Mort Lewis buttonholed him.

"Let's have a little talk, Randolph," was the politi-

cian's proposal as he steered their steps toward the elevator. "Haven't seen you since election."

"They've kept me busy down at the courthouse," returned Julian, not averse to spending a few minutes with the stout horseman, whose geniality had always seemed to him most sincere, a compliment he could not pay to many of the party leaders.

"Indeed, they have been dealing you some weighty cases," Lewis admitted as they stepped from the elevator. "But I don't know any one on the bench more capable of handling them with justice to all concerned."

Not until they had passed some minutes in general, cigar-clouded conversation in a corner of the smoking room did Lewis open the subject which had led him to seek the interview. "By the way," he began cautiously, "they're trying out poor Skinny Priest in your court, aren't they? Looks as if our old enemy, District Attorney Dodd, would put one over, don't it?"

"If you have followed the evidence, I suppose you are entitled to a guess on the jury's verdict," was Randolph's non-committal answer, easy of delivery, but accompanied with an astute glance in search of hidden motive.

"Oh, they'll convict the lad, all right, no matter how good a charge you may give him!"

"My charge will be strictly on the law." The justice spoke curtly, a warning note in his voice.

"We haven't expected anything but guilty in Skinny's case," pursued Lewis imperturbably, "but after the verdict now, it will be all in your hands. Don't you think you could see a suspended sentence for the boy? Some of those votes he handled helped raise your total."

"My total vote has nothing to do with the case, Mr. Lewis. Is it necessary to remind you that you should not attempt to discuss a pending case with the presiding judge?"

"No harm meant, Mr. Justice," returned the other cheerily, "not the tiniest mite of harm. But a suspended sentence, now, would be equally harmless and would assure Skinny's silence regarding certain little details of the last election that none of us can afford to have made public."

Julian's frown deepened as he abruptly arose. "I must be going," he said and left Lewis without the usual urbanities.

The trained politician smiled as he settled back into his chair and puffed a series of Havana rings toward the beamed ceiling. "Randolph's a sharp one," he mused. "Slick as they make 'em, and bound to maintain his dignity even between old friends. But he got my idea. He sure got it and Skinny will draw — suspended sentence. A mighty comforting thought for yours truly, if any one wants to ask."

Even District Attorney Dodd was surprised at the fairness of the charge to the jury which Randolph delivered next morning. He had not expected such treatment from a machine-made judge in a case so permeated with party politics.

The twelve lost scant time in reaching the decision that Skinny Priest was guilty as charged. His attorney voiced the customary motions for delay, and Judge Randolph, as was the usual practice, withheld his pronouncement of sentence, remanding the young prisoner to the Tombs until a later date.

At the close of the court day, Sam Herder, Ran-

dolph's clerk, a former newspaper man, came to him with a proposition.

"You've an excellent chance in this case, Mr. Justice, to get some free advertising," he began. "Skinny's story is one that all the newspapers will fall for. Through the organization I can work up great public sympathy for the young fellow. I'll have the boys who cover politics regularly run columns of appeal to you to give him another chance. If you want to let him down light, the public clamor in his behalf is your excuse and if you want to give him the limit, the same will prove you an excellent juggler with the scales upheld by the slim lady atop of the building."

"Has any one been talking with you about the Priest case, Sam?"

"Say, Mr. Justice," returned Herder in an injured tone, "do you think any one would dare approach me?"

"No, I don't believe any one would," smiled Julian, who trusted his clerk's honesty implicitly. "But you haven't lost your nose for news, have you?"

"Can't lose that, Mr. Justice. It was born on me."

Without giving a command one way or the other regarding the publicity campaign in connection with the Priest case, Julian turned to some papers that awaited his attention. The news advocate, who believed he was wise and who was intensely loyal to his superior, took cue from this silence and proceeded with his public sympathy plan. As a matter of fact, Mr. Justice Randolph was by no means displeased, for he saw approaching an opportunity to prove publicly the new, steadfast motive power of his life.

CHAPTER XXVII

BONDS ASUNDER

WITHIN a week all of Gotham that read newspapers was interested in the fate of Skinny Priest. Men of wealth and high station offered themselves as reference for the general good conduct of the youthful party worker. Worthy mothers of other errant sons wrote letters to the press asking that he be given another chance. Even the church took a hand in the matter, the names of certain ecclesiastical dignitaries appearing on petitions in his favor. And Judge Randolph continued to delay calling him up for sentence.

One evening, when public suspense had become acute, he happened to meet Boss Nordhoff in a restaurant.

"Why are you holding back on the Skinny Priest sentence?" the politician demanded. "The lad is locked up all this time. Why don't you come across with his suspended sentence and let him get a breath of fresh air?"

"I expect to pass on his case to-morrow," returned Julian, and promptly changed the subject.

His particular section of the Supreme Court had never held a denser throng than gathered next morning, for word had gone forth that Priest was about to emerge from his protracted hot water bath. Bench after bench was filled with handy-men of the organiza-

tion, men whose hearts went out to the prisoner because they realized that only good fortune had kept them from standing in his shoes. They were prepared to give him a demonstration as soon as the magic words, "Sentence suspended!" fell from the lips of their party-made judge. They planned, once he was out of the court room, to carry him through the streets on their shoulders; and that night the district leader whom Skinny particularly served promised free beer and cigars for the "hero" and all his friends.

When the pilot of the imported repeaters entered the court room, his tread showed confidence that he knew too much for any machine judge to give him worse than a lecture and the prospective suspended sentence. He was dressed for the occasion as for a festival. At a nudge from the bailiff, he arose and turned a smiling countenance toward the court.

"The crime of which you were recently convicted is one of the gravest against which our legislature has thrown up protective barriers," began Justice Randolph with deliberation. "On the purity of the ballot rests the fate of the republic. Inroads upon its sanctity must be checked with the sternest punishment."

Skinny Priest tried to look serious. "This is the lecture they told me I was in for," he mused. "Let her go, old top!"

As the judicial word-picture of the gravity of the prisoner's offense grew more graphic, the spectators became restless. "Why don't he can the talk?" demanded a "heeler" in the front row of a low-browed youth at his elbow.

"In your particular case, Priest," Randolph continued, "great pressure had been brought to bear upon

the court to extend you the mercy of another chance."

"Ah!" A murmur of satisfaction waved through the crowd, relieved that the justice was at last approaching his excuse for suspending sentence. They were certain of it when he detailed the sympathy campaign in the public press, the many petitions he had received, the personal appeals of men of prominence.

"I have delayed passing upon you that I might weigh those appeals, that I might learn what was behind them. I have gone into your past record, and find it far from free of the suspicion of similar criminal activity in previous elections. It would seem clear that the effort to save you this time is, in part, honestly misguided and in greater part backed by the ulterior motive of certain unscrupulous politicians to whom nothing is sacred but victory at the polls. The possibility that any public good will come from extending the mercy requested for you is too far-fetched for my credence. It seems to me equally certain that it would bring to you no personal improvement. I sentence you to serve not less than three years and six months, and not more than five years, in the State prison."

The silence of complete bewilderment ensued. Then an audible groan arose simultaneously from the lips of the crowd outside the rail and the politicians of preference who had chairs within. The tall figure from which Skinny Priest took his pseudonym collapsed like a closing jack-knife. He would have fallen to the floor had not the strong arm of a bailiff diverted his body into a chair. Obviously the shock was almost too much for him, but he managed to send one glance of malignant hatred in Randolph's direction as, after signaling the dismissal of court, the justice turned away.

"Well, what do you think of that?" The crowd asked the question in various forms of speech. But universally they branded Randolph as a "traitor." With a common indignation they reminded each other that Skinny had helped to elect the judge. They spoke heatedly of "their votes" and referred to Justice Randolph as "the bloke."

Those close to Boss Nordhoff were surprised that he did not change expression when they broke the news of the sentence to him. In silence he endured the "I told you so's" of the workers who had been so sure before election that Randolph was not to be trusted with the party's affairs.

"It's well we found him out so soon," the leader finally said with an ominous quiet. "Fortunately the organization can get along without Skinny's expert services for a year or two. Send some one down to the Tombs to seal his mouth about Mort Lewis. Promise him anything after he's done his bit. And say, tell him we'll even his score with that traitor judge."

Thus did Julian break openly with his party. Without a pang of regret, but with full knowledge of possible consequences, he had taken the long step toward a right future. Despite the danger involved, he was jubilant over his act. At last he was square on his feet, dealing "exact justice." And so he would go to the end of his term, he promised himself, even though his conduct meant eventual retirement from office.

That evening he had reward enough when Lora Nelson joined him in her uncle's drawing room.

"I've been following the Skinny Priest case," she said. "You certainly took that hurdle clean! I am proud of you, Julian."

He bent before her with exaggerated deference to hide the pleasure that he felt must be showing in his face. "Any words of commendation from you make me feel as though I had been knighted, oh Queen!"

"If I had the power, you'd have been knighted long ago. Since I have not, you have taken the first occasion to knight yourself publicly." Lora beamed up at him, her hand upon his arm. She keenly felt the instinctive way he shrank at her touch.

His eyes upon the light-laid member, he spoke with increasing gravity. "You are so much a queen to me that I am afraid of you, afraid that you will overrate me through one fair act and then denounce me when, in some other particular, I fail."

"But why expect ever to fail, Julian?"

He smiled strangely. "It is fitting that you should ask, you who never meet temptations along your regal way, you who have never stumbled as I have done."

"You need not be unkind, Julian, because my path has been a sheltered one. Perhaps my nature is not as strong as yours."

He contradicted her fiercely. "You are stronger than I. You have conquered even my craving for you by rousing in me the determination to deserve you first. Don't weaken, Lora — don't weaken me! And don't approve me too soon lest —"

"My friend," she interrupted, turning away from the impetuous look of him, "I try always to remember that conscience is a growth. You must remember, too. We can afford time, can't we, for yours to grow up?"

A rush of happiness, of gratitude that she understood, caught him.

"Dear, that means so much to me — so much," he

exclaimed. "Last week I managed not to do what I might have done the week before. This week it will be easy. Next week —"

"Then why, Julian, if you realize this, are you always so doubtful of yourself?"

He gazed down into her eyes one longing moment, but as he did so, her face seemed to change into that of another woman who had lately lifted unmasked love to him. A sudden revulsion of feeling stirred him. He laughed in a harsh way that amazed Lora.

"Because I am a flesh-and-blood man and I — I don't want necessarily to heed my conscience, or to wait for its slow growth. I don't want to be knighted by my sovereign for one or many small acts. I want so terribly to push aside the obstacles and be everything to her all at once, to be the royal consort to-day — to-night, that I feel in danger of turning deaf to obligations which —" He stopped short, then drew back his head and closed his eyes.

Lora, glancing down, noticed that his knuckles showed white in the hand which grasped the end of the lace scarf she wore. "It is an exquisite thing — Venetian?" she next heard him say.

Startled, shaken by her woman's response to the call of his love, an emotion new to Lora, unnerving, compelling, she looked up to see that he was smiling and natural. "Exquisite? Julian, what is it you mean?" she murmured through tremulous lips.

"I am stupid to know so little about feminine adornments. Is this Spanish lace, or did you get it in Venice?"

But a ghastly fear had clutched Lora's heart and strengthened her lips. She would not be diverted.

"Tell me what you mean," she insisted. "Since that day you asked me to judge you, you have done your best, haven't you? A man can only do the right that he sees to do. But since that day you *have* done the best you saw, haven't you — haven't you, Julian?"

His glance swerved. "I have done — well, the best I have been able to do at the time."

She waited, still watching him. Soon his eyes returned to hers with an imploring look.

"Lora, you are an exceedingly wise woman. Let me ask you one hypothetical question. Is a man excusable for turning traitor to the dearest sin of his past?"

"His dearest sin?" she exclaimed.

He saw at once that she understood, although they usually avoided any reference to the Frisbee girl. He absolutely knew by the sudden tension of her body and the deliberation with which she crossed the room and laid upon the mantel a single crimson rosebud she had worn. He also knew that, whatever her answer cost her, she would speak the truth as she saw it. In an agony of apprehension, he hung upon her words.

"I should say," — at last, in a mild, impersonal tone — "that a man would neither give nor gain by remaining true to his past sins — even his dearest sin. He must turn traitor either to the evil that is behind him or the good that is before him."

"I — I see," said Julian.

He knew now how prisoners felt after acquittal. Crossing to the hearth, with a hand that trembled slightly, he returned to her the crimson bud.

CHAPTER XXVIII

A WOMAN STRIKES

AFTER one gasp of surprise at the novelty of a machine-made judge who would not work according to rule, the tens of thousands of New Yorkers who neither "played" politics nor made a living from it settled back to applaud Justice Randolph for his upright stand in punishing Skinny Priest. So loud was the chorus of praise, led by the reform press, that the leaders of the organization wisely laid aside for a time any retaliative measures.

One would naturally have expected all women who sensed public affairs to approve this righteous stand of the new official and to join their pink palm-pats to the general encomiums. But there was one in whom was aroused only wrath thereby.

Roxana Frisbee sat in the commodious new apartment, which, thanks to her quondam employer's practical stipulations in her behalf, she was now well able to afford, and allowed her chagrin to boil over the usual vessel of her suppression. All about her lay newspapers with headlines and photographs of the same interesting man. She crumpled and flung them from her; then, springing to her feet, viciously trampled upon them.

Before and immediately after Julian's nomination,

the little creature who was so interested in his career had smiled an anticipatory smile, confident that the party could not and would not elect him.

And later, even though it changed somewhat in outline, this smile lingered on her face, ready to stiffen into grim exultation over the blunders she was sure he soon would make. Feeling that she knew the man and his weaknesses as did no other living person, she considered that she merely had to wait until he would come to grief, be deposed from his high office, and eventually descend to need of her. But what at first was expectation had been hectored into mere hope, afterwards into dread and finally into her present baffled anger.

Was it possible that Julian was actually going to be an honest judge? What he had predicted in other respects he certainly had achieved — the segmentary judgeship, his nomination to the full term, his election. And now he, Julian Randolph, so recently notorious as “the gilt-edged shyster,” the fixer of juries and the faculty master of a perjury school, was firing the city with enthusiasm over his righteous decisions!

Just as some women swear by the suppositious good in their men-folk, Roxana had come to believe in Julian’s craft. So thoroughly had she been tutored by him in the belief that the greatest success did not lie along scrupulous paths, that her mind at once began searching for cause of this radical change in the man and his methods.

Naturally and shrewdly, she pounced upon the reason — the other woman!

“Humph! She looks highbrow, and, from Julian’s change of heart, she evidently is,” elucidated Roxana’s train of thought. “She is the stereotyped heroine and

wants him to be good,— which probably he will oblige her by *appearing* to be until after he gets her. While I —”

Pacing her small drawing-room, Miss Frisbee laughed ironically into her mirrored reflection and continued her musing.

“I don’t want him to be good — therefore, I am the villainess. And what is it that the discarded villainess usually does for revenge? She goes to the pure, beautiful lady and puts a crimp in her happiness. Well, I don’t care to do quite that. Let the rest of them be as stereotyped as they like. I’d prefer some new angle to my machinations. Let’s see, what was Julian’s method when there was dirty work at hand? Make somebody else do it, of course! Usually me. Hum-m-m. Now who is there I could send to wisen up this demosel? Her uncle? No! . . . Ah, I have it! Like an answer to prayer, there comes into my mind the shuffling image of one Robert Partland, whom I have seen several times acting as escort to the lady. Either he is in love with her or he is not. If yes, then his interposition will be easy to incite. If no, it can speedily be pointed out that, as her guardian’s partner, he should hold the girl’s well-being dear.”

Roxana stopped in her tramp again to contemplate her decidedly attractive reflection.

“An excellent idea, my dear little, poor little villainess,” her thoughts observed. “You can’t miss. All men, young or old, wise or otherwise, like to imagine themselves protectors of womanhood — if the woman be graced with youth and beauty.”

Energetically she went to the telephone and took down the receiver. The irate voice with which she de-

manded a number contrasted oddly with the cooing tone in which she soon began to speak.

"Hello," she lisped. "Mr. Mulligan's office? . . . It is Miss Frisbee speaking. . . . Yes, please. . . . Hello, you. . . . I am sorry to have to break our luncheon appointment for to-day. It is unavoidable. . . . No, can't do it. . . . You know I would if I could. A combination of that car of yours and dinner at Woodmere and — and you, you know, is almost irresistible. . . . Yes, I certainly will, and I'll guarantee to tell you something. . . . I can't say exactly when, but trust me to make it soon. Now don't scold me — I really don't deserve it. . . . Can't do it. It's not the sort of thing I can tell you over the 'phone. . . . Um-hm-um, at the soonest possible moment. . . . Good-by. . . . I absolutely will. . . . Good-by."

A smile that looked cruel and yet somehow wholly tender softened the girl's face as she disappeared into her dressing room.

Some two hours later the junior partner of Nelson, Sheen & Partland glanced up with the half attention of a busy man to greet a caller announced by the card still held in his finger tips.

"Ah, Miss Frisbee, this is an unexpected pleasure," he began in a preoccupied way. Then, as his eyes encountered the faultlessly-dressed vision that stood smiling upon him, the absent fraction of his attention returned, and he hurried forward to place a chair.

From his resumed position at his littered desk he regarded her urbanely, the five finger tips of one hand nicely meeting their doubles of the other.

"It is some time since we have met face to face, al-

though I did hear your voice quite recently," he observed.

"Yes, I took my troubles to troubled Europe," returned Roxana, ignoring the thrust of his reference to her presence in Julian's quarters the evening she had answered his telephone call.

He risked a more openly appreciative look. "Paris, eh? You look it."

"Thank you."

If Robert Partland had been a younger man, not quite so bald above the temples, so short of stature, so wide of girth, his mind would probably have strayed farther and more willingly from the papers on his desk, for certainly the young lady was adequate excuse. But he had reached an age when decreasing vitality made him shun expenditure on issues that did not really matter. In the brief pause that succeeded his caller's crisp answer, he reached for a pen and signed a letter over which his eyes had been automatically running. This accomplished, he glanced at her over the rim of his glasses.

"To exactly what, my dear Miss Frisbee, do I owe the —"

With a gaze that was masculine in its directness, Roxana turned from the window in time to interrupt him.

"To my determination, dear Mr. Partland, of asking to what extent you are interested in Miss Lora Nelson."

At this blunt speech and the look that bore it company, the lawyer started, reddened perceptibly, then sat straight in his chair with an effort at resentment.

"Really, Miss Frisbee —" he began.

"Old fool," thought Roxana. Audibly, however, she was more polite. "Please do not be offended, Mr. Partland. I am not asking idly. My question is put strictly in the young lady's interests."

"I should naturally deduce that," returned Partland with lumbering sarcasm. "As you are generally known to be Julian Randolph's handy-woman, one of his most skilled 'fixers,' and as that meteoric gentleman is proclaimed by the society reporters to be —"

"I am no longer in Judge Randolph's employ," corrected Miss Frisbee, leaning forward with a manner decidedly impressive. "I have learned too much of his methods to retain my self-respect and that position."

"Your change must have been very recent."

"Yes," she hastily agreed. "It was consummated the night you recognized my voice over the telephone. Oh, don't smile so sarcastically, Mr. Partland. I know what you and all the professional circle think about me, but I assure you that I do not deserve your hard deductions. You are too shrewd a man to be deceived by a novice like me."

"Scarcely a *novice*, Miss Frisbee."

"I was speaking comparatively, Mr. Partland." Back of the appealing light in Roxana's pretty eyes lurked a gleam of triumph as she noted the relenting expression that this emphasized remark summoned to the attorney's billowy face. "My visit to you to-day has nothing to do with business. It is a mere matter of human interest."

Partland parried: "I find it difficult to disassociate you from business. Your past has been rather redolent of it."

"But my present isn't, and my future won't be.

You are the first person I have asked to look upon what my future is to be, Mr. Partland."

"You must have won a bigger fee than we lawyers can often command," he commented stiffly, determined against his instincts to be very much on his guard against the wiles of this notoriously fascinating young woman.

"Alas, I am not so clever! My changed position is due to a legacy, but one large enough to buy me the luxury of a conscience for the rest of my natural days."

"You are able to afford a *conscience*? I indeed congratulate you, Miss Frisbee. You have certainly reached affluence. So now you turn yourself to —"

"To charity and good works," she supplied, her eyes persistently and intrepidly earnest.

"And what connection has this call to-day with your contemplated exemplary career?"

"This call, Mr. Partland, is my maiden effort."

The lawyer felt that he was handling himself and the situation admirably as he curbed the indiscretion of further words and merely looked politely interested.

She responded with waxing sincerity. "I have no reason in the world to deceive you about my mission of to-day, even though I didn't feel so sure I should fail if I tried. Society gossip reports Judge Randolph to be in a fair way to win the hand of Miss Nelson, a fact that may not be patent to those nearest and dearest to her, as so often is the case. Knowing the absolute corruption of the gentleman's professional methods and — may I add — the contemptible complications of his private life —"

"*You add?*" interrupted Partland, with a startled, half-admiring smile at her audacity.

But Roxana Frisbee continued, with an unblinking chaste look that further astounded him: "Know also, by hearsay, of Miss Nelson's fine intelligence and high moral standards — beauties of mind which are much admired as her physical loveliness —" Breaking her sentence in two, the girl inserted a question that really interested her. "You think she is all this, do you, Mr. Partland?"

"I certainly do!" exclaimed the lawyer with a blithering stare. "Indeed, yes!"

His caller smiled with infinite gentleness. "I thought so. Although my life has been very, very different from hers, and, I assure you, misrepresented to a vicious extent, I deeply appreciate the type represented by Miss Nelson. It has been borne in on me insistently of late that somebody ought to enlighten her, before she crucifies this fineness and wrecks her life. My errand to-day is to implore you to undertake this. I could not quite find courage to go to her uncle. But, knowing you to be so close a family friend, so —"

She continued to look at him with sweet appeal as they stood face to face, for Mr. Partland had risen suggestively to his feet.

"Despite your new mission in life," he remarked in a stiff manner, "I feel that this interview is a waste both of your time and mine. No friend is close enough to interfere in a case like this, even if affairs were as you state. You will pardon me if I say, Miss Frisbee, that even the most humane woman has about as much as she can do to regulate her own life — if she does right. I am exceedingly busy this afternoon, Mr. Frisbee."

Just before Roxana passed through the door whi

in spite of his words, he had opened with a courteous manner, she raised him a tearful glance, none the less effective in that it was lubricated by no actual moisture.

"I am so sorry I troubled you," she murmured. "Doubtless I am over-zealous; but, remembering how much older you are than she — old enough to be her father, even though still the junior partner, I thought you might — *Good-afternoon, Mr. Partland.*"

It was with wicked joy that she observed the effect of her last barb — a hurried, concerned glance at himself in the mirror of the hat rack beside the door.

"You dear old Molly! You delightfully simple-minded old idiot!" she apostrophized the lawyer some five minutes later, when, from the shelter of a taxicab which she had engaged to await her pleasure on the street, she saw Robert Partland emerge through the revolving doors of the office building and hastily board another metered vehicle.

"Follow that taxi. Yes, the green one," she ordered the chauffeur.

CHAPTER XXIX

MISS FIX-IT DECIDES

“**J**UST to assure myself that my last trump, although a small one, is properly played,” murmured Miss Frisbee to herself, sinking against the cushions of her cab.

As the skid chains gripped the slippery pavement and the wheels got under way, her thoughts followed their example of activity. Herself, Roxana Frisbee, a missionary—a sort of Miss Fix-it? She smiled derisively, then scowled toward the tips of her small shoes, perched on the opposite seat, as several pertinent personal questions clutched her. Robert Partland was right in his reprimand. Where was the use of her being so clever, since she had made a fiasco of her own affairs? Why busy herself with the life snarls of other people, when she had not time to untangle her own? Of what benefit to her were philosophical deductions when she could not apply them to herself?

Within the curtained square of the cab, she signaled all her troubles to her and proceeded to examine them one by one. She was wasting her vitality on hatred of a man who had tricked her into a false marriage some years before. Why do it any longer, now that he had righted the wrong so far as could be done financially? He was certain to meet with worries a-plenty in the future without intervention of hers. With the forceful

decision to have done with it forever, she snapped her fingers at this time-grayed specter.

At once the wrongs she had suffered at the hands of a second man claimed her. She was foregoing almost certain chances of future peace of mind, if not happiness and even joy, by vengeful brooding over her loss of Julian Randolph. Long ago she had demonstrated satisfactorily to her own mind that any woman is at a disadvantage when tied to a man for whom she feels more ardor than he for her, the reason being that man's ardor continues only where he must strive. Then why did she wish to continue under such disadvantage?

A sudden conviction electrified her mind. As a matter of fact, it was not so much her lingering fondness for Julian that had caused her recent moves as the stubborn determination to win the fight — to conquer the man who had renounced her.

Vitalizing hope caused her pulses to throb. Could it be she had grown so accustomed to loving Julian that she did not realize when she had ceased to do so?

At once she fell to doubting whether she had ever truly loved the man. He had fascinated and enslaved her by the united forces of his brain and masculinity, but never for one moment had he made her happy. The idea was obsolete that by mistreatment could man hold his woman. Since she was free enough to realize this, she must have shed her chains! She flushed with shame at the humiliating part she had played so recently and so voluntarily, only, after all, for the sake of winning in the fight. She wasn't heartbroken that she had lost — she was only angry.

Truthfully, sacredly, supposing that Julian wanted her for life, did she now want him? Her mind put the

question and demanded truthful answer. Her graceful head began to twist from side to side, then shook in active negation. *She didn't believe she did!*

And why? Her dark eyes softened as the answer seemed to rise personified before her.

Million Mulligan was looking at her, with ingenuous admiration in his gaze, with a great and protective love in it, with an inspiring faith in her goodness.

It was true that she did not feel for the bluff millionaire the absorbing passion he had professed for her, but was not that very fact an argument in favor of his suit? Certainly, *she* had tested the dissatisfaction of reversed relations! Without doubt she had grown very fond of him, with an almost maternal pride over his many virtues and an encompassing tolerance for his crudities. And how wearily, how constantly she yearned for the luxuries which he was so determined to supply!

Ever since that first rehearsal of the perjury mill when she had been unceremoniously cast as his fiancée, the absorption in her of the wealthy confidence man had waxed. After Randolph's sudden elevation to the bench, Snap Comsky had gone on with the defense along the lines worked out by his former partner, and had proved so convincing an alibi that the client was freed. At the end of the case, through all his nervousness and relief, Mulligan had realized more acutely than judge, jury, or attorney the importance of the part played by the piquant star witness in securing his acquittal. He did not for one moment doubt that, except for her vivacity, her shrewdness and her genius at evasion, his alibi would have crumbled, his defense would have failed.

The night he was freed, he had carried her off bodily

to a splendid entertainment and had announced to her with characteristic bluntness that from the first moment he had seen her he had adored her; that since then she had won a gratitude which he would require all his remaining natural days to demonstrate satisfactorily; that he needed her even more than she did him; in brief, that whether she saw it at once or not, the only thing for both of them was to marry each other.

Roxana had been diverted, then touched and at last, although subconsciously, allured by his cyclonic wooing. But through this and all ensuing interviews she had forcefully pinioned her admirer to the anxious seat. He had been puzzled and indignant, but never despairing.

Leaning toward the window of her cab, the young woman smiled grimly as she saw Robert Partland's taxi drive under the Nelson *porte-cochère*. Through the speaking tube, she instructed her own chauffeur to turn back down Fifth Avenue, and soon they fell into line with the southbound vehicles on the opposite side of the street. The pudgy lawyer was probably now with the regal Miss Nelson, enlarging upon Julian's turpitude. That part of her day's work, of her life's work, was ended! The result she would have to judge from the outside. It was time, indeed, that she turned her gaze inward, that she sought a better understanding of her own motive powers. She focused the searchlight of absolute honesty upon her inner self and, in her turn, began to feel puzzled and indignant, although, like Muligan, not at all despairing.

Now that the ledger of her past was so emphatically closed, now that she had accepted the monetary peace-offering of Boss Nordhoff and had exacted the last toll

of revenge from Julian, now that she recognized the depth of her affection for the man who so honorably wanted her, what was wrong?

Certainly Million's feeling was a good and enduring one, for, through its inspiration, he had forsaken definitely the twisted paths of his past operations and, in every way possible, had squared himself with his world. She respected him, which was promising; she did, indeed, very much need him, which was imperative; and she ached with all her starved little heart for the companionship, the protection and the home which he had come to symbolize — all of which seemed conclusive. Then why in the world the pervasive reluctance which had filled her all along — which at this very moment filled her?

"Poor villainess, poor missionary," she thought to herself. "Poor, pretty, lonely Roxana, you've hoodwinked other people so long that it is hard, even when you try, to understand yourself. But you must — you really *must!*"

Gradually, in the intense light of her introspection, she saw the truth. She seemed to be looking into the eyes of her lover, noting with new appreciation, and yet with ominous fear, the vast truth of his regard. She understood now — she understood! So *that* was what was wrong? A thrill seized her that it was all so much finer, so much deeper than she had imagined. Under impetus of her self-revelation, a brave resolve took possession of the girl's mind.

"I'll just tell him all about it," she promised herself. "For the first time in my life, I'll be perfectly square with a man — because he's the first man I've ever known who expected it of me."

CHAPTER XXX

OVER THE TEACUPS

“**D**EAR me, three lumps in your third cup? Why, you only had one in your first!” exclaimed Lora Nelson to her uncle’s partner as the hand of the drawing-room clock was approaching the figure of five that afternoon.

“Yes, and you may remember that I took two in my second,” returned Robert Partland, smiling into her white face with as wistful an expression as his puffy features could comfortably accommodate. “I believe in an increasing scale of sweetness; one in the first, two in the second and at least three in the third. ‘Start temperately’ is my life motto. That’s why I’ve talked with you as I have to-day. Start temperately and wisely, my dear, and your happiness will have a chance to increase rather than to cloy and sicken you. I know it has been hard for you to hear what I’ve told you to-day.”

“But so much of it he has told me already himself!” Lora Nelson made a last, pitiful attempt to be true to the idol she had set up and dedicated in her heart. “He confessed to me a long time ago the questionable methods he used to practice and asked me to search his future instead of his past.”

“You say that was before he went on the bench?”

"Yes, before."

"I am sorry, Lora dear, but his record won't bear inspection any better afterward than before. From that day when your friendship seems to have begun, the day at our office when he came out and talked to you so delightfully immediately after having accepted an illegal bribe from Consolidated Traction interests, a fee of two thousand dollars a month to give up the prosecution of any damage cases against the lines —"

"If it was illegal, why did you offer it to him?" demanded she, with sudden acerbity.

Robert Partland continued to contemplate her gently and unashamed.

"I don't mind acknowledging in your interests that we did it, my dear; but please observe that our offer was merely illegal, not immoral. What Randolph has done since looks more culpable to me."

"Since?" murmured Lora dismally, as heedless of concealing her feelings before Partland as she would have been before her old nurse.

"Why, yes. How do you suppose he got on the bench?"

"He attracted the governor's attention by the masterly handling of the Nordhoff defense, I suppose."

"My dear child, you do not understand even yet. It was masterly work, yes, but not masterly in the way you mean. He planted the jury in the Nordhoff case, and through it got a verdict contrary to the evidence. It was a travesty on justice."

"But that was all before he talked to me of his reform," she objected.

"And after that he consistently played the game of the political judge; played it right up until his recent

election. His nomination itself was the profit of a species of blackmail."

"Blackmail? Is there anything else of which you are going to accuse him?"

"Don't speak as though this were personal accusation, Lora. I happen to know that Boss Nordhoff was about to go back on part of the bargain that won his brother's freedom. He had openly promised the other leaders to ditch the shyster, when Randolph, with superhuman cunning, hounded out some dark chapter of Nordhoff's own past — one which had escaped all the other sleuths on his private record — and held it over his head until he secured the nomination."

"But you speak only of his mistakes," said the girl. "What of the fine things he has done, the sentencing of Skinny Priest, for instance?"

"My dear, Julian Randolph's sins are not mistakes and he does nothing, good or bad, that is not for his own ends. The Skinny Priest sentence was only a daring stroke of policy."

The old friend glanced into her lowered face; then, with a watchful but determined look, continued his inquisition.

"But what I haven't gone into yet is his record with women."

"You mean —?" The tea-pot did not quiver as Lora poised it above her cup and raised her eyes straight to his. "You mean the Frisbee girl?"

Partland stared down at her in frank amazement. "Yes."

"Well, that is also something he confessed to me."

"Why, Lora, I didn't think that you would discuss such a —"

But she stopped him with fine scorn. "Do you suppose I don't know that affairs of that sort are common in the youth of you men? Only most of you never acknowledge them. It appeals to me as at least one thing in Judge Randolph's favor that before he asked me to marry him he told me all about this affair from its beginning to its end."

"Its *end*, my dear Lora?"

The emphasis of this question made the lid of the tea-pot rattle and the girl's face stiffen into a look of fright. "Yes, the end," she whispered, her eyes holding beseechingly to his, her lips clumsy with the words her habit of thoroughness compelled her to speak. "He told me shortly after he first went on the bench. Why, only recently he asked my opinion as to his obligation toward her!"

With renewed determination Partland arose, stepped forward and took the green tea-pot from her nervous clutch. Then he caught and pressed her two hands between both of his. Several times he started to speak, but, induced by the panic on the face he had adored for so many years, paused in heartfelt pity for her suffering.

"My dear little child," he said at last. "I did not dream that you cared for him or that he was deep enough to deceive you. You have always been so keen and your admirers so many. If Bruce or I had only suspected! It was mere chance that brought to-day's suspicion to my attention! But I know you want the truth. I happen to know also that Miss Frisbee was in his apartment only a few weeks ago, long since he confessed to you. If you don't believe me, I'll buy his valet and give you proof."

"No, no! I know you wouldn't deceive me. You love me better than that, don't you? Don't you, Robert?"

The flesh lines of Partland's face took on nobility as he looked down into the wound of this beautiful creature for whom he had yearned hopelessly since her little-girlhood; his eyes noted the way her mouth proudly stiffened in the center and quivered at the corners; he felt the hurt he was inflicting upon her clear to the fingertips within his palms.

"Yes, I love you at least better than that," he admitted, smiling a smile that was more pitiable and pitying than tears.

"Is that — have you told me all now?" she asked gently.

"Isn't it enough?"

"Yes. It is enough. And if it is really all, Robert, I think I'd like to be alone now to — to think it over."

"Perhaps it is better to take the first cup without any sugar at all — to take it bitter, you know," observed the lawyer, bringing his smooth-stepping retreat to a temporary halt in the doorway. "It will help you to appreciate the many sweet cups which certainly you will have — later on."

Up in her study, at her desk, Lora sat contemplating the first sheet of a note she had begun:

"Dear Julian Randolph, J.: You are a very delightful person, but, I have concluded, a wearing delight. I am not going to see you any more. I have judged you, as you asked, from the future (which is now authenticated past) and this is my verdict. I now understand many things about you, many words and man-

ners, which seemed strange at the time of their occurrence, and the more I understand you, the less I like you.

"I love you, it is true. I have told you that. But love in a case like this is a short-lived matter. Respect goes farther. Unless you could prove that you had been sincere to me, at least, unless you could convince me and the world in some big way that you are not —"

At this point Lora picked up the sheet and vigorously tore it into bits.

"Unless — unless! Ifs — ifs! Hopes against hope!" she accused the scraps.

Creasing open a fresh sheet, she picked up her pen and wrote again:

"Dear Julian:

"I don't suppose you can help being what you are. But you can at least prevent my ever seeing you again. I know enough about you to wish never to see you again. What satisfaction could you have expected from such a fraud as our friendship?"

But when half through the determined writing of her name, the girl paused and tore this second draft in two.

"I end it with a question — out of fear. Imbecile!"

For a while she sat idly, at first with her pale cheeks propped in her hands, then with her face lowered into the pile of torn paper on her desk. Opening her eyes occasionally, she contemplated the tears that began to saturate the scraps and trickle here and there on the mahogany lid.

"There is no use opening the argument," ran her thoughts. "I know his power and against him I could only lose. . . . Only I wish . . . I do *wish* there was

something to do except suffer. It is cruel to be deprived of even the small activity of writing my disappointment and reproaches and — yes, I might as well acknowledge it — my *hopes* in a note. But words are a woman's weakness."

After all, she sent no note to Julian.

CHAPTER XXXI

COMING ACROSS

IN the meantime, a conversation equally absorbing to its principals had taken place between another man and woman — this, in a more public setting, the foyer of the Hotel Knickerbocker, at the fashionable tea hour.

“Now that you have heard the whole sad story of my past, and to slow music at that, what do you think of me?” Roxana Frisbee faced Million Mulligan defiantly over the padded wall of the S-shaped settee in which she had made the most gallant confession of her life.

Dread of her own caprices had caused her to drive straight to his hotel after her mental illumination along the avenue. Dread, also, had kept her out in the lobby lest the coveted luxuries of the inner rooms should cause her to weaken. Dread had kept her eyes upon his facial expression and brooked no debilitating pleasantries for fear the gay sounds and sights of the popular rendezvous should lure her from her determination. She was desperate, both selfishly and unselfishly, to accomplish it, because she felt convinced that without the confession happiness would be impossible for either of them. If he wanted her for what she really was, he could have her and welcome; if not, there was no use dallying in uncertainty.

The orchestra had drifted through one distracting

theme after another, but the dainty brunette had not listened. Women, modishly gowned, perfumed, chattering, tripped to and from their carriages through the tireless, revolving doors. The usual metropolitan masculine idlers greeted them, escorted them, or parted from them, as it chanced. But she of the blue tailor-made had no eye for their concerns. The ever-human appeal of outsiders was there in goodly proportion — Westerners in out-of-date clothes come to Gotham to learn how to buy excitement with their gold; sight-seeing, educational personages, obsessed with the determination to do it right, "no matter what it cost"; out-of-job actors who had drifted in, trying to look as though they and Broadway "belonged," and at the same time avoid the vulpine eye of the house detective. But to-day Roxana wasted no vitality on her wonted surmises as to their whys and wheres and whats.

"I have discovered the reason I don't want to marry you," she had announced without preface when her wealthy suitor had emerged from the café where the page had found him.

"Then you don't want to marry me?" His genial face had gone as blank as that of a boy whose kite is suddenly whisked away in a whirlwind.

"In the first place I don't — but in the second I do."

"Then mark me up for second place!" He had laughed spontaneously.

Roxana had stammered into her confession, refusing to hear the relief in his voice. "It's — it's — because I find I like you too well to deceive you — because you think too highly of me."

"Lord bless you, dear child," he had interrupted, "those are the worst kind of reasons for refusing to

marry a man. Come into the tea-room and let's have a little party for two on the strength — or weakness — of them."

It had required all the iron of her recent resolve for Roxana to get him seated tête-à-tête in the double chair outside, and, at the risk of losing all the love and respect and luxury which he was trying to pour into her palms, to tell him relentlessly her whole, culpable, wretched story.

"First off, Roxana Frisbee is not my real name."

"Then the quicker I change it the better. Mine's real," Mulligan inserted.

With a sad little smile for his persistence she commanded more serious attention and forced her muddled life-story upon him. Roxana May Morrison she had been christened by a mother who was able to do little more for her, owing to her early death. At seventeen, pretty and willful, she had been summering in the Catskills, chaperoned by an aunt of disciplinary limitations. There had come the man — an electrifying personality and past-master of wooing of the cave-man sort. From his first glance his eyes had looked like fate to the romantic girl, although he was older by a dozen years.

But she had been wise, or had tried to be, which, so far as results go, often amounts to the same thing. She had kept his ardor in check until a formal proposal was made and an elopement arranged. Their marriage was to be a quiet one and kept secret for a time. There were family reasons, he declared, and she believed.

In the little Jersey town of Hackensack they had been united by a justice of the peace. At the end of two weeks of happiness the blow had fallen. "Family reasons" turned out to be an apt expression, as there

was a prior wife, with two small children. Even the name used in the ceremony had been that of a younger brother.

"The man," she whispered close to the staring, set face of Mulligan, "was Marcus Nordhoff, boss of the organization party."

Secretly terrified by his expression, but outwardly undaunted, she hurried through the recital of her later career, with its first merciful oblivion of New York, the counter behind which she had drudged, the typewriter she had rented and at night learned to manipulate, the law office in which she had found employment. Julian Randolph had recognized her possibilities of usefulness to him, had tutored her and paid her well, had later given her a companionship which had become the beginning and the ending of her days. Perhaps because of the acute, secret realization that her life was already spoiled, perhaps partly because of her immense admiration for Julian, she had entered into her later relationship of semi-free love with him without any particular mental or moral scruples. She had found something sweet in life and she had taken it. Now that it was taken away, she found that she was tired of it. She did not care. The only thing she ever really had cared about, she believed, was that she now had to tell him, Million Mulligan, her tale.

By the time she reached her half-pitiful, half-defiant conclusion, the smile lines were ironed, as if forever, out of the speculator's face. His eyes roved moodily from this to that unit of the frivolous, kaleidoscopic crowd, evidently without seeing one of them. She saw his lips move, but had to lean closer to hear what it was he muttered.

"I'll have to drag the scoundrel from the bench — no matter what he's done for me."

Roxana caught and slightly shook his arm. "You'll do nothing of the kind. You'll regard my story as confidential and you'll be open-minded enough to see him as he is. Oh, no, don't turn that wild-beast glare on me! I don't love him any more — perhaps I never really did. At any rate, whatever I felt for him wore out, like an old suit. I don't mind saying, just between ourselves, that I honestly and truly do love you, whether you're still interested in the fact or not. Julian Randolph is square — has always been square with me, which is more than I have been with him. It is never a fair fight when a woman attacks a man through his passions. Women who do this knowingly deserve what they're pretty sure to get. So don't pity me to his blame. I flatter myself that I was something of a temptation."

"You mean that you —"

Roxana forced herself to laugh lightly into his tortured expression. "Just about that — I threw myself at him. He never sought me except for work. He never seemed really interested in any woman until Miss Nelson's day."

"And you? And now?"

"I have taken my last unfair advantage of Julian to-day. Already I regret it, for I like and respect him. I only hope that he may escape any ill results of my smallness and may remain my friend. With which death-bed repentance —"

Her voice sagged, even as she lifted bright, anxious eyes to his face.

"Well, what do you think of me?" she repeated,

"Me? I think I am very sorry for you." He drew a heavy sigh, and, pursing his lips, wagged his head regretfully from side to side.

The girl settled back into the curve of her seat without any outward sign of having been struck a heavy blow. Now that it was all over, she turned with belated interest to her favorite study of the people, smiling in a satirical way at their varied displays of enthusiasm. Within herself, however, she began to realize that a hurt from the blow, more acute than she had ever felt before, was pressing down and down upon her heart.

After what seemed a long while, the silence rasped on her nerves and she spoke in a crisp voice: "At least you should be pleased that you are giving me up voluntarily."

"Giving you up?" Mulligan turned blank eyes on her.

"Why, yes — giving me up."

"Is that the way you dope me out — *me?*" Regardless of curious glances, the big man suddenly grasped both of her hands, as though to emphasize his claim upon her attention, and stumbled into a flood of reassurances. "You poor, little, suspicious, hard-luck child! What sort of four-flusher do you think I am? A regular bob-tail, eh? Do you suppose my past has been so ivory that I've any right to expect perfection in yours? Do you honestly calculate I've taken such a shine to myself, big, rough, clumsy creature that I am, that I wouldn't mortgage the whole bank roll even to *know* a clever little queen like you? Why, you're the finished article, no matter what door of life's mill has turned you out! You're what you are, ain't you? I was looking sorry only for your sake, thinking with

clinch'd brains what a rotten deal you've had. It's been some shock to me, I don't mind confessing. But it would have had to leak out some day and your coming across of your own free will has just made us better pals. Get me?"

The ingenuous look had returned to his face and Roxana gazed at him, her heart imploring through her eyes to shed the hurt.

"What sort of pals? Do you mean that you still wish to —?"

"Looky here, my girl," he interrupted, "if you're determined to insult me, wait until after we've taken the big jump by benefit of clergy, when I can legally answer back. I've been no Immaculate Conception in my past, Heaven knows, but that ain't saying I didn't have a mother — God bless her — and a couple of sisters. For their sakes I've banked a few case notes of ideas on women's rights. The most important of them is the right to a square deal when they marry — which the most of them don't get. I want you for what you are in the present, and, if I show that I'm enough of a guy to hold you, for what you're going to be in the future. You're a good little sport to come across as you have to-day, and it's shown me that you must — Say, you do care for me a little, don't you?"

"I care — a-plenty." The moisture in her eyes and the catch in her voice answered him more fulsomely than her words.

"Then let's call the past quits and sing out for a fresh deck for to-day." Still holding her hands, he raised her to her feet. "Come on in now, and let's have that little engagement party for two," he urged.

"You're the biggest, finest man in the world," said

Roxana gravely, as she started to move in the direction of the gay folks.

The male so superlatively lauded nodded energetic agreement. "I sure am some person, since I'm going to get you!"

No pink rose in the vase that soon stood on a small round table between them looked sweeter or purer to Million Mulligan than Roxana Frisbee's face, as it flushed with anticipation over the plans they busily began to lay.

"I can't understand how you've escaped other designing women so long," she remarked with a dainty frown, "when you have such enormous powers of giving pleasure."

"It was because I was waiting for the best of the lot and —"

"And what?"

"And, I suppose, because you ran away."

"Um-hum, I thought so. You see, I have theories too," she explained severely.

"Well, you needn't get so uppish about them!"

"I'm not that — just kind of discouraged."

"Discouraged?"

"Yes. You see, perpetual motion is a rather uncomfortable prospect for a woman who wants to settle down."

"Oh, that bolting trick is just the wise woman's way of setting the pace to win the man, you know! I'm the sort that you don't need to win more than once," comforted Mulligan. "And besides, those ain't the real reasons, anyway. Say, it's dum lucky that I'm not to be one of these unrequited love victims, after all, ain't it? I'd sort of hate it, pardner. It wouldn't

seem just my style. Looky here, won't you promise always to be as square with me as you have been to-day?"

She gave the pledge seriously with her eyes, then laughed with a pretty proprietary air. "Dear soul, I will, if you'll promise to stop saying '*ain't*.' And never again, in either this world or the next, wear an Easter-egg diamond the size of that one in your tie."

Beaming, he tossed his most costly scarf-pin to her across the cloth. "We'll call that No. 1, Mrs. Million Mulligan to be," said he vastly pleased. But the next moment his smile changed into an expression of steel. "That reminds me," he declared. "I've got to make a trip across town to see one Marcus Nordhoff."

Roxana's instant alarm pulled her half out of her chair. "Nordhoff? You—you're not going to attempt anything——"

"Nothing brutal, my girl, although, according to Hoyle, I ought to finish him. We start a clean slate together, you and I. He ruined your past, but I can't let him ruin your future through scandal—unless he refuses to see the importance of scheming out the best-grade, most iron-clad and everlasting annulment of one small Hackensack mistake of his that Jersey justice has in stock."

CHAPTER XXXII

TRACTION'S BRAZEN OFFER

ONLY through the exertion of his last atom of self-control was Justice Randolph able to restrain himself as he contemplated the complacent figure of Robert Partland bulging over the edges of a small, leather-seated chair. Their interview had made him feel that his chambers were not of sufficient dimensions to hold both of them, that at any moment he might arise in a physical effort to cast the corruptionist out into the public corridor, an accomplishment that was quite within the power of his greater strength. He was seething with righteous anger; his every sense of dignity was outraged.

"Draw on that common sense with which you used to be so abundantly supplied in the days when you were less a justice and more a human being," the junior traction attorney continued. "We are not asking much. Just a trifle of advance assurance that the decision you hand down in this case will be the decision you would have reached had we never even whispered to you."

Partland was fully conscious of the glare directed toward him, but, believing that he knew the real Randolph, he inwardly designated it as "pure bluff," an effort to raise the ante in this depraved "jack-pot." Never having felt the slightest inclination toward self-reform,

he could not conceive of any real change in the other. To him, Randolph was the same man who had repeatedly tricked him in damage cases, who, from his own hands, had accepted a handsome bribe to refrain from the practice which had cost Consolidated Traction so dear and had lent the support of his staff of corrupt witnesses.

With super-effort Julian crushed down his inclination to physical outburst and controlled his voice sufficiently to ask a quiet question.

"If you are so confident that my natural decision will be the one you desire, why do you take the trouble to insult me? It is dangerous."

"Insult you?" queried Partland, wishing he dared add his real belief that Randolph could not be insulted. "You are talking like a child to-day, Judge. As if *you* didn't know that this sort of thing is common practice! The proper decision in this double-fare proposition means a great deal to Traction and you know from experience how willingly the corporation remembers its friends."

"And you really believe that you can buy me?" Julian asked, a note of the injury he really felt in his voice. "It looks as though the last of my chickens was coming home to roost."

"Don't put it so harshly, man," admonished the lawyer. "I am not thinking of anything so raw as offering you a roll of bills. Just give me the nod that your decision will be right, and your share of our clean-up will come to you through a legitimate stock transaction handled by one of the most reputable brokers on Wall Street. You needn't run the slightest risk in the matter."

"A legitimate stock transaction through one of the most reputable brokers?" repeated Julian. "Surely, a nice way of putting it!"

"You can readily understand how Consolidated Traction stock will soar, if we win in this first test of strength with that Public Service Commission bugbear. It is the easiest money that will ever come your judicial way, and it will increase your standing in certain powerful quarters."

Julian suddenly lurched to the edge of his chair. "I've heard quite enough, Partland. As for you personally, I don't want you ever to address me again. If you venture into my court, no matter what the pretext, I shall refuse to hear you and state from the bench, if necessary, my reasons. Now, will you go, or must I ring for my clerk to escort you out?"

Robert Partland had never been quite so completely surprised. Was this indignant judge with blazing eyes, the suave, the crafty, but always charming Randolph, who, never before, had failed to vent his pleasant laugh during the most unpleasant issues? The billows of his face grew red under the other's steady glare. He seemed about to speak, but the words were lost in a sputter of lips that refused to articulate.

"Will you go?" exclaimed Julian, realizing that he was fast approaching his limit of self-restraint.

Partland seemed at last to sense his danger, for, muttering a word that sounded like "idiot!" he shuffled to the door.

With a sigh of relief at having contained an outburst that at best would have been undignified, Julian sank back into his chair. His stare, deprived of its object, wandered aimlessly toward the desk calendar which

Herder, the methodical clerk, kept written up to the minute. It became riveted on a particular entry for the last day of the week, an entry which read

“ Saturday — a. m.
Decision due on
Writ of Mandamus,
Public Service Commission
vs.
The Traction Corporation.”

He was familiar with every phase of the extended battle between the corporations and the people in which this case represented a final engagement. He had watched the struggle of the reformers — “dreamers” many had called them — to force through the Legislature a bill authorizing the formation of a special commission to take charge of transportation matters. Having been a member of the legislature during a portion of the period, he had seen the bill, in various forms, and under several sponsors, fail of passage, owing to the corrupt practices of the transportation lobbyists.

He had noted the time when the public became aroused to such a pitch against the carrying companies that the proposal of the Public Service Commission became a factor in the campaign. He had seen the corruptionists give up the fight at Albany, forced to return to inner works of defense.

The bill had finally been passed and the desired commissions created. To one were entrusted the special problems of the metropolis, while the other looked after those of the remainder of the State.

For years the masses of New York citizens had been crying out for a single fare to the superb salt-water

beaches adjacent to Coney Island. The franchises under which Consolidated Traction operated seemed to assure the public this reasonable rate of fare, but, under the pretext of using the former right-of-way of an antiquated steam railroad for part of the distance, the corporation had been successful so far in exacting a ten cent fare.

At last this vital public question had been taken up by civic organizations which were interested in making the natural playgrounds of the poor more accessible, and complaint had been made to the Public Service Commission. The Traction corporation had settled to the fray and fought bitterly throughout the extended hearings. Perhaps the fact that a legislative investigating committee, headed by a redoubtable up-State senator, was about to descend upon the metropolis to investigate past acts of the commissioners had dissuaded the monopolists from resorting to their usual methods, and encouraged the civil servants to their duty. At any rate, the decision had been against the railroad and the single fare had been ordered.

But Consolidated Traction had promptly ignored the decision, as it promised to ignore the commission in the future, and court action had naturally followed. The attorney for the Public Service Commission had sued out a writ of mandamus to compel the Traction officials to put into effect the single fare rate. Arguing that the enforcement of this rate would be an unjust raid upon the corporation's treasury, its counsel — Nelson, Sheen & Partland — had moved the vacating of the writ. And the decision now lay with Justice Randolph.

Up to the moment of Robert Partland's entry into

his chambers this afternoon with the company's brazen offer to give the justice a successful whirl in the stock market without risk, Julian had believed that the case had come to him in natural course. He had been congratulating himself that his decision in the Skinny Priest case had served as a sufficient warning to litigants of the sort who search for secret favors, that he was not purchasable.

But since his interview with Partland, he no longer felt sure of either point. Possibly the Traction people had manipulated matters so that the case should fall to him. Evidently they did not believe him sincere in his desire to be an honest judge, despite his having broken with his party over the election issue.

Deep depression settled over him as he meditated upon this most recent insult, an atmosphere not lightened by the knowledge that, had it not been for his own earlier adherence to shifty moral standards, the attempt would never have been made. It seemed to him that every hand was united in a determined effort to pull him back into the quick-sands of trickery and double-dealing, the mire of graft, from which he had struggled to rise.

And even the spiritual support of Lora Nelson's encouragement had been withdrawn from him without a word of explanation. That she seemed to have cast him out was the deepest hurt of all, but one that he did not propose to endure without further effort.

He was considering the most practical form of next attempting to reach her, had, in fact, reached an inspired decision to inveigle young Carrots Mulrooney, her groom, into a plot, when his clerk brought in the card of Bruce Nelson, underneath the name of which

was scribbled: "A matter of vital import to both of us." The "both" was underscored.

In a flash Julian sensed the real weight of the danger which threatened him. Bruce Nelson's arrival, immediately after the expulsion of Partland from his chambers, could mean but one thing. He was satisfied that this second visit was not a coincidence. The junior Traction lawyer had had time to return to his office with the news of Randolph's lofty stand. Nelson, with all the might of his years and his prominence, had come to apply some sharper lash. The real crisis of Julian's judicial life was at hand. He tried to prepare himself to meet it.

For a moment he delayed his answer to the waiting clerk. "What next?" he thought, with a heavy sigh. "Her uncle—it's hard that he should come to me on such a mission!"

CHAPTER XXXIII

AN OPEN THREAT

FROM intimate knowledge of his visitor, Julian was fully aware that the great corporation attorney was not accustomed to cooling his heels in any man's ante-room. The famous Nelson temper must already be at boiling point. Yet he continued to withhold the word that would open the door of his private chamber.

No longer was he contemplating the fact that the presence of the senior counsel of the richest of utility corporations could mean only some craftier, more dignified attempt to influence him in the vital decision that impended. His mind dwelt upon another condition which Nelson's intercession asserted conclusively — the desperate need of Consolidated Traction, the fact that they did not dare rest on their legal rights in the matter of that single fare. The call proved to him more convincingly than any of the arguments advanced at the hearings or couched in the weighty briefs upon his desk that Traction was in the wrong.

During these minutes of hesitation, while Sam Herder waited in wonder that even the judge should delay admitting a man of such importance, Julian Randolph, J., reached a momentous decision. Definitely and absolutely he worded in his mind the opinion he would return in the important case before him.

Then, throwing back his head, he smiled a trium-

phant smile. "Show Mr. Nelson in, Sam," he said.

The greeting which the justice extended to this leader of the metropolitan bar was tinged with reserve, but even so, was sufficiently cordial to surprise the visitor. It increased the difficulty of the lawyer's opening. Indeed, it was Julian who finally precipitated the crucial topic.

"I seem to be unusually popular with your firm to-day," he remarked, his eyes inscrutable. "Mr. Partland has been here before you."

"So I understand." Nelson showed some slight embarrassment. "It is because I am afraid he bungled, put us in an unfortunate light before you, that I have followed."

"Mr. Partland was most direct," commented Julian. "There was no misunderstanding him."

"I should have attended to this matter myself in the first place, Mr. Justice. Partland has a rough way of saying things that sometimes rasps on highly strung nerves."

"He did more than that to-day, Mr. Nelson."

"Then let me quiet the discord he made and begin afresh," was the suave rejoinder. "We are greatly concerned over your decision in this Public Service Commission hold-up, Randolph. The possibility that you might be misled by public clamor for a single fare occurred to us, and it seemed advisable to talk the matter over privately with you. We hope you will see that a decision against the corporation would not be conscionable."

"And you expected to convince my conscience by sending Partland to offer me a bribe?"

"Fie on such harsh words, Mr. Justice! Mr. Part-

land has put it bluntly, as I feared. Forget his visit and listen to me. We think it unjust and wrong that the power of making rates should be placed in the hands of five politicians, however great they may be and however high their character. If you sustain them in this low fare matter it will be but the preface to other raids upon our treasury. It will absolutely put an end to the future transit development of the city. No sane man would think of going into a new public utility enterprise, with all the expense involved, and then, at the end of it —"

Julian halted him with a gesture, but before speaking took up a bulky printed brief which bore the imprint of Nelson, Sheen & Partland.

"I am certain, Mr. Nelson, that you went into all that most fully in this document. Why is it necessary to explain it again in chambers?"

"Then you have decided to rule with us and against public clamor?" The wrinkles above Bruce Nelson's pointed beard readjusted themselves into a smile. "I want to congratulate —"

"I have decided, yes. But I do not say what." Julian's interruption was crisply voiced. "I simply state that, in my opinion, you overlooked no point in the corporation's favor when first presenting the case."

"But surely, you have made up your mind to decide with us?"

"My decision will be announced in open court next Saturday morning. I do not consider it 'conscionable,' Mr. Nelson, to give any one an advance hint of its trend."

The face of the veteran lawyer clouded and his lids drooped until his eyes peered through narrow slits.

"You force me, Justice Randolph, to take a step I should have been happy to avoid," he said icily. "Consolidated Traction cannot afford to have an adverse decision in this case, even in your lower court. You must decide with us, and I must have your promise to do so before I leave this room."

"Must?" At last Julian relaxed into his famous laugh. "And when did the Consolidated purchase the supreme court?"

"Well, sir, we bought one member of that honorable bench something over a year ago when Julian Randolph, lawyer, signed an agreement to take no more personal damage suits against the corporation."

Julian could not suppress a start of surprise at the daring of his visitor. This open threat of a man he knew so well socially was more incredible than Robert Partland's bribery offer. Yet he essayed a smile.

The older man continued. "You have not forgotten that we hold your signature to an agreement which, if properly handled, will bring about your impeachment. We should dislike extremely to make the document public, but we must be protected from this lofty attitude which has come to you so late."

"That agreement was signed when I was an attorney and had a right to accept retainers anywhere," countered Julian. "It was signed before I had any thought of becoming a judge."

"Then all I can say is that it is unfortunate — for you — that you could see no further into your future; for I assure you that it will be sufficient to drag you from the supreme court bench in disgrace if you force us to use it."

"Are you not overlooking the fact that this same document bears the signature of Mr. Partland, your junior partner, and that he signed for your firm? The production of that paper would result in the disbarment of all of you." Although Julian spoke calmly, he did not fully succeed in hiding his concern.

Nelson's answer was firm and assured. "Partland is prepared to assume individual responsibility. He will look out for himself, and he has not set himself up to pass judgment upon his fellows."

Too well did Randolph realize the truth of this. With the firm's influence in certain quarters, Partland probably could squirm from under any charge against him on the ground that he had been forced to enter into the restraining agreement by Randolph's own sharp practice against the corporation.

"Even so," he conceded, "I don't believe you can affect my place on the bench by anything that happened before I took the oath of office. I am not afraid to stand on my record since."

Nelson reached over to a revolving book-case near him and took out a volume containing the Constitution of the State of New York. Rapidly he turned the pages until he reached a section for which, evidently, he was looking.

"Let me refresh your memory on our method of impeachment in the Empire State," he said, then read impressively:

"Article 6, Section 11.—Judges of the Court of Appeals and Justices of the Supreme Court may be removed by concurrent resolutions of both houses of the Legislature, if two-thirds of all the members elected to each house concur therein."

He smiled blandly as he glanced up at Julian and noted how the broad shoulders of the younger man were sagging, how intently his eyes were fixed upon the flat top of his desk.

"What chance would you have with the legislature, Mr. Justice?" Nelson prodded mercilessly. "You have broken with your party, a party which has a safe margin over two-thirds of all the members of each house. A word from the leaders, and out you go. You don't doubt, I hope, that they will speak that word for the Consolidated, that they will be glad to even the Skinny Priest score?"

This was an argument that seemed irrefutable. Julian knew it and Nelson knew that he knew. There was nothing for him to say.

"I am sure you are not going to force us to any such harsh measures," proceeded Nelson, in a gentler tone. "I am willing to make it as easy for you as possible. The legal points involved are fine ones. Perhaps, after all, it will be best for the greater number of citizens to protect the treasuries of the public-service corporations. I can write you a decision that will save your face. All you need to do is to affix your 'Randolph J.' thereto, and the written proof of your worst slip in practice is yours."

As he was not answered, the attorney continued: "Come, man, take the sensible view of this disturbing dilemma! Think of the long future ahead of you. You can still be known as the people's judge, if that is your ambition. Remember that impeachment spells your absolute ruin. There is no returning after that, and surely you can see that you haven't a chance with the legislature when the organization is so pronouncedly

against you? I have had experience in such matters. What do you say — shall I write the decision for you to sign?"

Julian's face was saffron-hued, tragedy-lined, flaccid, when he finally looked up. Nelson was more than satisfied with the look of him and the hopeless, stumbling tone of his reply:

"I think — you had — better — write it."

"The wisest decision you ever made, Randolph!" Attorney Nelson reached up and straightened his perverse black bow tie, as if feeling that now the least of things should be in its proper place. "I was certain you would take a common-sense view of the matter, after you had looked at it from all angles. I am glad personally, as well as professionally. The decision will be ready for you Saturday morning."

A glance over his shoulder as he was passing out of the door showed him the splendid figure of the young judge slumped, his arms resting upon the desk, his head dejected to their support.

Smiling unutterable cynicism, Bruce Nelson closed the door. His thoughts were pleasant as he hastened back to his own office. Once more he had won a fight for the corporation which he served with body and soul. Another judge had proven as putty in his clever fingers. He chuckled to himself.

His thoughts took a more intimate turn as a mental picture of his beautiful niece appeared before him. In his heart there pulsed a vast thanksgiving that she already knew the real Randolph and had cast him out of her life. Lora had told him of her ultimatum against her most conspicuous suitor some days since. He felt even more glad of the decision now than he had

then, for she was the one creature whom he would not have cared to sacrifice, not even to serve Consolidated Traction. After this latest exhibition of weakness in "the shyster," he could never have let the girl enter into the marriage engagement which had seemed to portend. But he was rejoiced that Partland had taken the matter of revelation into his own hands. For that, if for no other reason, he would freely forgive the junior partner for having made a botch of his share of today's issue.

CHAPTER XXXIV

BY AID OF CARROTS

THE court of Justice Randolph had never worn its dignity more heavily than this morning. An attorney of national fame was summing up his attack on the employers' liability act which had recently become a law of the State by legislative enactment. The decision to come from the judge would be of widespread importance, and that dignitary, his intense eyes and furrowed brow evidencing the intake and mental assortment of details, was giving exact attention.

The various corporations which were large employers of labor were represented by talent that overflowed the space within the rail, while the seats given over to spectators were filled with labor leaders who, through their presence in numbers, were making a demonstration for the man who toils. In every face, from judge to stolid bailiff, was evidenced the strain of the session.

The attorney who was closing had reached his climax and stood with arm upraised in the utter silence that lent contrast to his noisy harangue, when an outer door swung open with a creak which, in the atmospheric intensity, sounded as loud as a scream. Many faces frowned and many necks twisted in time to see a newcomer slip in, one who, through incongruity, captured immediate interest.

Giving full credit to his meager figure, he could

scarcely have claimed more than fifteen years. His youthfulness of itself would have attracted attention in this room so dedicated to the serious legal troubles of grown-ups; but in addition, his garb was remarkable, from the long-visored plaid cap and frayed, shrunken overcoat to the immaculate horsey uniform of khaki and the trim riding boots of yellow leather which made his attire an anomaly. His over-long arms swung awkwardly and his head, when uncovered, was seen to be lit by a brick-red thatch.

Carrots Mulrooney had been in a police court twice in his life, a fact which had emboldened him to open the door with considerable assurance. But when he stood within this chamber of more august justice, challenged by hostile eyes, seeing, instead of the genial figure in riding togs that he sought, a black-gowned, majestic being enthroned on a distant dais, panic clutched him, the palpitant, humiliating panic of inexperience.

He hesitated in the main aisle, his hands twisting the plaid cap into a mass beyond recognition. But a look of urgency soon blotted out the fright on his freckled little countenance. Straightening, he started up the aisle, heedless of the outraged bailiff at his heels, who was obviously determined to shoo him out.

With a scowl, the famed attorney lowered his effective arm. Caught by the new arrival's unique appearance and the unknown motive that moved him so rapidly, the aggregation of legal talent and spectators gave the lad their full attention.

Would he — would he reach his goal, or would the bailiff catch him first?

With muttered threats and grasping hand, the aged officer shuffled over the strip of matting. Just a foot

ahead of his clutch skipped the animated interruption of court proceedings. Would the boy — *could* the boy make it?

A general sigh of gratification ascended as, by an extra forward spurt and an adroit shoulder twist, the little chap reached and grasped the gate before he was stopped.

"What d'y' mean? You beat it, kid!" commanded the bailiff in a winded species of hiss audible throughout the room.

"I gotta see the judge," Carrots threatened back in quite as loud a hiss.

"This ain't no children's court; come along with you!" insisted the exponent of order, his hand sliding warily from the arm of the boy to the collar of his shrunken overcoat.

"I've gotta see the —" began Carrots more loudly, shaking at the restrictive hand in time to the palpitations of his heart.

But both his fright and the words were cut short by the familiar voice that interrupted just in time to save the situation and his fifteen-year-old dignity.

"Let him pass, bailiff. He is a messenger of mine," said Julian, seeking to stiffen the amusement which was dispelling the haggard look his face had worn throughout the morning.

As Carrots smiled a radiant greeting, his wizened appearance vanished; even his freckles seemed transfigured into adornments. Slipping through the gate, he made his way to the side of the bench with the independence of one American gentleman going to confer with another. The justice leaned over with an equal confidence of manner.

After one backward glance to make certain that the ubiquitous bailiff could not hear, he whispered into Julian's ear: "She's going to ride at four this P. M., Boss. Hope you didn't mind my disturbing your work. You gave me leave to come here, you know!"

The weariness of the judge completely disappeared at this message. "Are you sure? I thought she only rode mornings," he whispered back.

"Instead of coming this A. M., sir, she telephones along about ten-thirty that she'll want the filly at four. Didn't take me long to get a fine young colic and come down here to cure it."

Although the lid of Carrots' left eye lowered in an expressive wink, the look of affairs on his face was not lightened by any smile as he divulged his artifice.

"Here's something for medicine."

Both faces remained stern as a crinkly piece of paper passed from a large white hand into a small brown one.

"Thank you, Boss." Carrots turned half about as though considering the important conclave satisfactorily terminated; then, with a backward glance of stealth he added: "Think I done it pretty neat, don't you?"

Julian nodded decided agreement and had almost regained an upright position when, impelled by the look, half of threat and half of awe, with which the boy regarded the presence of the waiting bailiff, he leaned over to hear one more whisper.

"Say, Boss, can you get away? Will he leave you off?"

Julian's smile was too wide for concealment as he guardedly replied: "I guess I can manage a get-away, old chap."

The indirect cause of this interruption of court was

the continued stubborn refusal of Lora Nelson to admit Julian to her presence. With a consistency that had become as puzzling as it was disheartening, the household servants had returned "Not at home" to his calls in person, and "May I take the message" to those over the telephone. She herself omitted with sphinx-like reticence to answer his notes.

Painfully conscious of his masculine limitations in seeking to divine the workings of her mind, but emboldened by the strongest sense of rectitude in so far as she was concerned, Julian had flouted all unhappy conjectures in his determination to compel a meeting. His inspiration to enlist the aid of Carrots had gained appeal with a longing to accomplish their reconciliation out in the open, borne along by their horses into the companionship where she always had seemed most natural and most lovely to him. His disturbing experience with her uncle the previous afternoon had only increased in his mind the necessity of talking with her face to face. So the young groom had been visited, the plot divulged, the development successfully manipulated.

It was with a disturbance at his heart almost as painful as delightful that, sitting Charlemagne like the mounted guard he was, he recognized the woman for whom he waited entering the park, her small devotee in attendance.

As Randolph rode past the boy, he was diverted by Carrots' rapid pantomime of shaking one hand with the other, evidently to signify that all was well, followed by the loud, crafty greeting: "How d'y'do, yer Honor? Why, didn't you tell us you was coming out to-day?"

With a reproving grin at his co-conspirator, Julian

crowded past and pulled up beside the startled girl. He didn't speak at once. He just bared his head and looked at her. All the largeness in the man, all the vitality of his love for her, all his weariness and wonder united to command her in that look.

At first she met his eyes, flushed and breathless. Then the fact that, knowing what he was, she should have to struggle so hard against the appeal of him, infuriated her. Tightening her rein, she cut short the fervid greeting of Blond Bess for the stable mate.

"Will you kindly pass me, Julian? I don't wish to ride with you." She ordered rather than asked this, but in a voice as lifeless as the last season's leaves which fluttered under foot.

"I won't, Lora, for I wish to ride with you more than you could possibly wish me not to."

"You are discourteous."

"Maybe so, dear. But you have established the precedent in the last two weeks."

She glanced at him defiantly. "I suppose it *has* looked that way," she said. "Petty, and not very — very gentlemanly of me."

"Being what you are, Lora, you must have some good reason for your lack of consideration of me. I don't resent humiliation from you, but I wonder if you quite realize how it has hurt?"

"I have a good reason." She turned toward him in one of her sudden accessions of frankness. "I don't mind telling you. It won't change things any. I haven't liked to seem rude, but I didn't dare to see you, to talk with you — even to ride with you. Now I am stronger."

"You didn't dare? Why?"

For a few paces she studied the simplicity of his manner; then laughed a short, scornful laugh.

"Do you think a woman with a weakness for you could be expected to resist your golden speech, your famed personal magnetism, your inborn domination, when even juries can't? I could keep silent — *that* I could manage to do."

Julian leaned over to give her an ardent look.

"Thank you, my orchid-minded mentor," he murmured. "Your declaration that you still care for me is none the less appreciated for the severity of its wording. And I accept your apology."

"My — my apology?" exclaimed the girl with a glance almost of fright at his assurance.

"Yes. Now I am going to show you how foolish your fears were by not talking to you at all. You are going to talk to me, to tell me what it is all about. But I warn you, you'll have to wax most eloquent if you persuade me that there is anything wrong. You'll have to convince me as you say I did my juries — against judgment."

Although he spoke lightly, Julian was very grave as he straightened up in his saddle and took a fresh grip on Charlemagne's rein. The flush gradually faded from Lora's face. She looked pale and wretched as she also gave her surface attention to her mount. For a while they rode in silence.

As though with even their animal spirits subdued by the imminence of the moment, the horses stepped along briskly but sedately, only the occasional side-wise roll of an eyeball or swish of a tail attesting their companionship. From behind, the more uneven hoof crunching of Carrots' steed on the gravel path could be

heard. Presently a subdued whistling began to tease the air, as though more than two of the small cavalcade were embarrassed by the surcease of conversation. Carrots was evidently feeling the responsibility of his chaperonage.

"Well?" asked Julian at last.

Lora turned quietly to face him, but with a harder light in her dark-lashed eyes than he had ever seen there before.

"For some months there has been a standing question between us, Julian," she said. "It is, after all, a good thing that you have forced this interview upon me to-day, for I am now quite ready to answer you. The man I marry must be my kind of a king, a man who is true and morally, as well as physically, brave, a man with 'Honor' in more than his title. *You* are ineligible."

"And yet you love me?" murmured he, with exultation, instead of the expected shame, in his question.

"Yes, I love you. But the fact is my humiliation rather than my glory, as it should be. I could not possibly marry you. Oh, not for any great principle!" she added hastily as his eyes continued to project their smile into hers. "I don't want to pretend any loftiness that isn't really in me; but just for self-protection I couldn't — just because, as I once told you out here in the park, I want to be happy and I never could be happy, married to you."

"Since you have this alleged weakness for me," suggested Julian, "why not call your refusal a principle in disguise?"

"This is scarcely a fit exercise ground for your cleverness!" she exclaimed indignantly.

Julian's expression deepened in whimsicality.

"My cleverness is something I can't control, Lora dear. And in return for your compliment I'd like to say that sometimes I think you love me almost enough to make me happy. Let me also add in all sincerity that while you are a lot of other wonderful things, you are an especially good — a *very* good girl."

For a second or so, Lora stared at the man, then the angry flush revisited her face. She jerked up the head of Blond Bess and touched her with her crop.

"Let me pass, please. There is no reason why I should let you laugh at me, why I should stay to endure your condescension, when you —"

Julian encouraged Charlemagne to keep abreast of the filly in the narrow, woodsy pathway they had entered.

"Yes, when I —?"

"When you are what you are, Julian Randolph: in public a cheat and in private a lie!"

"My dear, my dear," he protested as if to quiet her, although he looked startled. "It is an old story — what they say about my public career — but exactly what is this other accusation?"

"Don't try to soothe me. Don't try to use that famous mesmeric voice on me; for I am past its influence now," cried the girl in an abandon of resentment that made him marvel. "I am a woman and naturally you have befuddled my judgment of your career, but, just because I am a woman, you can't continue to deceive me about your faults within my scope."

"Deceive you, Lora?"

"You told me of a woman once in your life. You remember when?"

"Yes."

"You said you had given up her and all such affairs since knowing me. You have sat with a sanctified face in my drawing room and told me that merely knowing me had made all such unworthiness impossible; that, whether I was ever anything to you or not, you could never — And I? I *believed* you! I *loved* you for volunteering settlement of this vital subject. Often since I have thrilled over the look of you when you told me. And all the time you were knowing her just the same!"

"Dear, you are talking extravagantly."

"Later you pretended to feel troubled about your obligations to her and asked my opinion."

"But, Lora, I assure you —"

"You have assured me before. Why not exercise your faculties in new crimes? Only exercise them on some new person; I refuse longer to be your victim. Now, let me pass you. Must a woman literally race you to get away?"

Although Julian had been unable to interrupt her, the girl's unhappy vehemence ceased unexpectedly at sound of a violent commotion in their wake. The shriek of an automobile horn was followed by the scream of a tortured beast and the shouts of frightened humans. Pulling up, the two turned in their saddles and gazed backward in time to witness the end of a grewsome accident.

CHAPTER XXXV

HER SORT OF KING

WHEN they turned Lora and Julian had just crossed an open roadway and were well into the bridle path on the other side. But they were easily able to divine what had happened.

Carrots, who had loitered some distance behind through his disinclination to eavesdrop, had whipped up his horse to overtake them and had dashed across the road straight into the pathway of a high-power touring car. In his effort to avoid a collision, the chauffeur had not calculated upon the skidding of the wheels on the slippery macadam. The heavy machine had knocked the plunging horse out of its path, struck a lone tree-trunk by the roadside, and tumbled back, shattered. The youthful groom had been thrown, and now lay pinned under a forward wheel.

As the two looked back, the exigencies of the scene were increased by angry fumes which began to arise from the rear of the car. Obviously the gasoline tank had caught fire. Seized by that panic of self-preservation which is the heritage of all humanity, the occupants of the car, shaken but miraculously uninjured, scrambled to the ground and hurried with the bystanders to a safe distance. From this position they could see that the boy lay pinioned by one arm, which he was wrench-

ing in a valiant effort to free himself. Then a shrill cry of agony broke from his lips; after it he lay absolutely still. He seemed mercifully to have fainted.

With pallid faces and trembling knees, the people hurried to increase their distance from the explosion which already their ears anticipated. They were electrified, therefore, to observe a man in riding clothes rush suddenly from the farther bridle entrance straight toward the danger fumes. They marveled at his temerity when he dropped to his knees and inserted one shoulder under the forward axle which held down the arm of the boy.

"A fool — a fool he is! He'll be burned to a cinder!" muttered the chauffeur.

"You can't save him — save yourself!" cried the owner of the car.

"Back! Everybody back!" came the authoritative command of a traffic policeman, who now invaded the scene of action, riding a safe circuit around the danger point.

But the man under the front of the belching car still strained, with scarlet face, the muscles of his powerful frame taut.

"Lora!" they heard him cry. "Officer! Somebody — quick! Pull him out as I lift! Now!"

At the ring of his voice, the policeman jumped from his horse and, to his credit be it said, rushed to aid in the rescue. But he was only in time to drag backward a young woman who ran from the bridle path. Averting her obvious rash intention by superior masculine force, he compelled her into safety and held her while the ominous vapors around the car changed into a bright flare.

Then they saw the rescuer stumble toward them, his coat torn, his face smeared with streaks of black, half carrying, half dragging the limp body of the boy. As he reached the roadside and safety, the tank of the automobile exploded with a deafening roar and a volcanic puff of smoke.

It was with a strong sense of unappreciated righteousness that the exponent of public safety now released his infuriated charge.

"Julian — Julian — dear God!" sobbed Lora as she tried to share the burden of the boy.

They laid their small friend prone upon a grassy bank by the roadside, and tenderly bent over him to learn the extent of his injury. The audience swelled and closed in around them, gesticulating, criticising, commending. But Lora and Julian ministered to their charge quite as though they were alone in the park.

Avoiding the arm which had felt the crunch of the wheel, they searched for other broken bones; straightened out the two lank legs; then, pushing back the vivid thatch of hair, wiped the dust from the thin, freckled face. Each laid a hand over his flannel shirt and pressed an ear to listen in the region of his heart. Tears were dripping unheeded from the gray eyes of the girl when she raised them close to the black ones above.

"He has only fainted, Julian. And you — you are unhurt? Oh, thank God — thank God!"

Julian turned peremptorily to the policeman.

"His arm is broken. Get me water as quickly as possible, and send in an ambulance call. No, I'll take him to my home, if you'll be kind enough to get me a taxi. You can direct the ambulance surgeon there.

And, officer, please take charge of our horses. They go to the Saddle Club Stables." He added his name and address.

But an automobilist who had driven up proffered his luxurious limousine and into it Julian lifted the boy, who now seemed to be recovering consciousness.

"Easy, Carrots," he murmured. "You'll feel better in a jiffy. We'll soon have you comfortably settled in my quarters, and Jube-Jube will coddle you like a twin brother. I'll tell him what pals we are. There now, I know that was a bad twinge, old chap, but —"

"Lay his head in my lap," urged Lora, settling to receive the shaggy pate in her corner of the seat. "What is it, Carrots? What is it you want?"

She bent to the labored whisper of the boy. Then a surprised and vaguely hurt look crossed her face. "You don't want me to hold you? You prefer the judge? . . . Oh, I see. . . . Yes, he certainly *is* an O. K. gent."

She smiled in a humid way over him as she helped to settle him across Julian's knees, with his head resting partly against the broad chest expanded to receive it and partly in the crook of the arm that, despite its hard muscles, curved as soothingly as a mother's might have done around the pain-racked little form.

"You're standing it like a grown-up, young fellow," Julian encouraged. "It won't last long. It's a mere matter of fixing the arm in splints and letting it grow together again. Meantime you will visit me, and you can invite your family and everybody you know to come and see you. What say? Yes, that's right. Think of the soldiers and what they have to stand."

He nodded down into the tortured eyes lifted to him

and bent with Lora to catch another whisper of the pale lips.

"You sure are one O. K. gent. I never meant to make such a mess of your ride."

A spasm of pain seized the boy. Gasping, he collapsed against the friendly chest and passed into a second faint.

"We won't try to revive him until we get him home," advised Julian. "It is more merciful." He smiled gently at the girl.

And he continued to smile when he felt her head pressed in a sudden excess of emotion against his free shoulder.

"You are a brave man, Julian," she whispered. "You don't know how grateful, how happy it has made me to find that you are so brave."

His smile faded. "You were telling me just now about your sort of king. You say I am physically brave to-day. Listen, dear; I am trying with all there is in me to learn to be morally brave. I have never defended my past to you. But, supposing I had been absolutely honest since my judgeship — would that convince you of my sincerity?"

"Yes, yes, Julian, only —"

"Well, Lora, I have been."

"But what about —"

"I can prove it to you if you will let me talk to you. And as for the first attribute of your sort of a king — do you think that I could possibly be so miserable a specimen as to appreciate and love you, Lora, and be untrue to you?"

"Still, Julian, I know —"

"Don't accuse me, for you are wrong, absolutely wrong. I have seen Miss Frisbee once in private since I've known you, once when she came to my apartment unannounced to see me on business that she considered important. I finished with her that night, and she proved yesterday that she was quite reconciled. Didn't you notice an announcement about her in the morning papers?"

"Announcement? What —"

"She was married to Million Mulligan yesterday while on a motoring trip. He has been interested in her since the first time he saw her, and I think he will make her happy. I hope so, for her life up to the present has been a hard one. And I am sure she will be the salvation of Mulligan."

"You are glad, Julian — really glad?"

"For shame, Lora. I love you — *you* — in a way that excludes the slightest interest in any other woman. You must believe that. . . . You do believe it, don't you?"

Gravely he searched the quivering, tear-stained face raised to his.

For a long time she looked and looked, with every nerve of her woman's intuition on guard against deception. Then, with a sigh, her cheek inclined again to press his shoulder where the coat had been torn.

"Poor me, poor me," she breathed. "I must — I *do* believe it!"

Although Julian had no hand free to aid his caress, he bent until his lips brushed the bit of white forehead beneath the brim of her riding hat.

"And you'll let me talk to you soon, if I use only the

plainest words — if I guarantee not to be eloquent? ”

Her face reflected his wistful smile.

Her answer was the merest whisper:

“ Make it *very* soon.”

CHAPTER XXXVI

A CLEVER MAN'S MISTAKE

WITH pleasant expectation Lora permitted Robert Partland to hand her out of the Nelson limousine, when it halted in the covered driveway before the great town house of the Berkeley Armisteads, and accepted his assistance up the carpeted steps of stone. No one of her social intimates had the success of Vida Armistead in entertainment, whether the scale was wholesale or small. The musicale of this Friday evening was certain to be sufficiently worth while to satisfy the most exacting "true-lover," the supper to follow would doubtless introduce novelties, and the later dancing be staged in the most artistic private ballroom in all brilliant Gotham. Besides, the piquant hostess being Lora's best-loved woman friend, every detail of the affair was imbued with personal interest.

Upon thought of the dancing came keen regret that Julian had found himself unable to accompany her. Despite the happy *finis* of their misunderstanding that afternoon, he had pleaded "pressure of affairs judicial" and Lora had charged herself that at no time, no matter how urgent her desire for his companionship, must she interfere with his career. Uncle Bruce, also, had begged off on account of a "sudden legal entanglement" which would occupy him for the entire evening

in his library at home, and had suggested the junior partner as her escort.

Partland had shown such eagerness to serve that her momentary hesitation was conspicuous. His hurt manner had instantly softened her decision, so that, although she had not overcome a certain resentment against him on account of his gratuitous information about Julian, she found herself chatting with him in their old confidential manner on their way to the function. She purposely forbore any mention of Julian, even denying herself laudation of his exploit in the park, for she did not doubt that the motive of Partland's interference had been solely his great regard for her. Either from disinclination or tact, he made no reference to his last call upon her, but bravely shouldered his share of the conversational burden, supplying much resourceful news of mutual friends.

On descending the Armistead grand staircase, the two discovered that they were somewhat tardy; that, indeed, the guests already were assigned to the half circle of chairs that filled the ballroom floor. The orchestral prelude of the promised Wagner program was beginning. But Vida, radiant in her favorite rôle of hostess, was waiting in the lower hall for a murmured welcome. After a hand-clasp and smile for Partland, she stood on tip-toes, seized Lora's shoulders and touched a feather-like kiss to her cheek.

"I am so glad you came, dear. It's been an age since I've seen you," she exclaimed in a genuine way. "I was afraid you wouldn't feel up to it."

"Feel up to it?" queried Lora. "My feelings could scarcely be improved."

"Or your looks, either," agreed her friend. "What

a wonderful gown — that silver lace, with the orchids, is nothing short of ideal on you. You were good to make such a toilet for my party and brave to keep up this way. It must have been a good deal of a shock."

Lora looked down upon her inquiringly for a moment, then her thoughts reverted to the little groom. "Why — why, how did you learn of it? You don't mean to tell me that the evening papers have got it for a story?"

"Oh, my, no!" Vida gave a small gasp of horror that seemed increasingly remarkable. With a look akin to compassion she changed the subject and asked about Mr. Nelson.

"I'm simply loaded down with regrets this evening," answered Lora, "and if the queen of hostesses needs assurance that they are sincere, I can vouch for all that I bring. Honestly, Vida, it would seem that all my little world is in the clutches of the law. Uncle Bruce sits at home in the library fretting out somebody or other's defense and Julian is in his chambers struggling with a decision equally vital and equally hard."

Vida Armistead raised her delicate brows. "I am indeed sorry that your uncle couldn't come."

"Judge Randolph's regrets are even more heartfelt, I assure you," said Lora. "He loves music, and I have described to him the joys of your aftermath dances."

The little hostess gazed up at her curiously. "You certainly are a wonderful girl!"

"At least I feel wonderfully happy to-night. I couldn't stand it to feel more so."

The curiosity in Vida's eyes changed to pity.

"Come, come, Lora, dear," she murmured, "you shouldn't pretend before me. Of course I know you

did not bring Julian Randolph's regrets. Didn't you guess that he wouldn't be invited?"

"Not invited, Vida? Whatever are you talking about?"

"Dearest girl, I've heard everything and, while my heart aches for you, my mind thoroughly approves of your course."

"You've heard what and from whom?" Lora's low-voiced question was intense.

But her friend did not answer, for a rustle of programs was followed by an expectant silence from the ballroom. Vida drew her within, where Robert Partland found them chairs, just as the pure notes of the "*Gebet der Elisabeth*" thrilled the air. A great prima-donna had consented to sing the aria if she might do so early, in order to reach the Metropolitan at a certain hour. It was a unique privilege to hear her at such close range, and every ear was turned eagerly to her silver-sweet supplication. At the Opera these Society folk might have yielded to the carelessness of custom, but at the Armisteads, they felt more of obligation. Vida was one of them, they had not paid to come, and the diva had condescended, despite the goodly check she was to receive, in order to entertain them. Not a whisper ruffled the air; scarcely a vagrant thought marred the moment.

Perhaps Lora Nelson, ardent musical devotee though she always had been, was the only person present who did not hear the song. She had expected to enjoy the treat, but found herself filled with too great disquiet to listen. Through the applause and the graceful responses of the artiste, she smiled and clapped her hands with the rest, without realizing at all what she did.

She never knew what the next number was. With a flutter of foreboding at her heart, she was pondering over Vida's strange manner, Vida's look of pity, Vida's ambiguous words. She had not seen her friend lately and the announcement that Julian had not been invited to the musicale, after their earlier references to the pleasure of having him present, was no less than startling. Why hadn't she invited him? Ever since their introduction, she had been one of his most zealous social advocates. Why hadn't she expected her closest friend to "feel up to" coming to her affair? If it was the accident to the groom in the park that Vida had heard of — certainly no sane person could taboo Julian for his part in that! Why was Vida's heart sorry, even when her mind approved? Why was she so especially tender, so commiserating?

It seemed to Lora, as she sank deeper into her introspection, that she remembered a shade of perplexity crossing Julian's face when she had asked him that afternoon during their drive home from the park whether he was coming to the musicale. She had hoped — had expected — that he would wish to escort her, on this first evening after their reconciliation. He had hesitated, had glanced at her with a question in his eyes, then had seemed to make a decision of the moment. He had explained the pressure of work in his court, had apologized to her most convincingly and had worded regrets for Mrs. Armistead.

And he had not been invited? She had the statement of her hostess for that. Just possibly he might have misunderstood the name she mentioned and been referring to some other affair scheduled for that evening. Then in a flash the solution came to her.

Julian had heard aright, yes. But he knew the depth of friendship that existed between Vida and herself and, not having been invited, he wished to spare her the embarrassment of discussion.

Much gay chatter tintillated through the next interlude. Then the trio of the Rhine Maidens brought silence, and with it opportunity to consider another phase of this unexpected problem. Vida had heard something about Julian. Who had been talking to her? Strange that so recently Lora herself had been talked to on the same subject! It was fortunate for Robert Partland that the rich feminine voice-chords were claiming all attention, for the inquiring look focused upon him by the beautiful Miss Nelson might have caused him abashment had it been observed.

Not until the dancing began did the girl find opportunity to speak the question of her glance.

"Take me into the conservatory," she suggested when Partland came to attempt the honors of the first number. "I am tired and the first few dances are bound to be crushes."

They passed through the small forest of the famed Armistead palms, and sat down beside a sportive fountain. Then she turned upon him. "Have you been carrying tales to Vida?" she asked bluntly.

"Why — why, she's like a sister to you!" he stammered. "I — I thought you'd want her to know."

"Robert, what can possibly be your excuse for this new profession of talebearing?"

His affection for her was so great that the sight of her displeasure almost silenced him. Yet her cold look urged him to utter a defense.

"I knew that Vida had this informal Wagner-fest

on the books, and I was afraid that it would make you uncomfortable if Randolph came. I wanted to spare you the embarrassment of meeting him so soon, so I told Vida of our little talk over the teacups, and that — that you'd given him his *congé*, you know. In fact, I —”

Partland's words tripped, then ceased altogether when he glanced up to find Lora's eyes still steadily upon him.

“And might I inquire again into the motive of this determined surveillance of my most personal affairs?”

“Lora, dear, don't take this manner toward me — surely we've been friends too long for that!” exclaimed the lawyer, making a valiant effort to throw off his confusion. “As I told you that day, my one excuse for what you call surveillance is that, knowing your fineness, Randolph is no fit man for you to —”

Again Lora interrupted. “Julian Randolph is the strongest man I've ever known.”

“Julian Randolph,” declared Partland more firmly, “is the *wrongest* man I've ever known.”

“You don't know him at all or you wouldn't say that,” exclaimed the girl. “Does a man have to remain wrong just because he starts wrong? Are we puppets in an antediluvian play, unalterably tagged either ‘good’ or ‘bad’? How stupid of anybody to judge anybody else, since we all have in us the worst and the best possibilities! Isn't it much more of an achievement to fight your way back after you've strayed?”

“Perhaps, if one does it, Lora. But Julian Randolph hasn't. What about the Frisbee woman?”

Lora's eyes flashed a warning. “The bare details you told me the other day were true,” she said, making

an obvious effort to control herself. "But your coarse assumptions were quite false. Miss Frisbee's visit was a business matter, substantiated by the fact that she has since married another man."

Partland laughed harshly. "Oh, if you've talked to His Honor, the Judge, there's no strength in the most infallible dissuasion. The subtle sophistry and golden tongue of that crook lawyer would convince any —"

"That is all I care to hear, Robert. You have done worse than insult me. You have maligned my dearest friend." Lora's anger blazed. "As I expect to marry this subtle-mannered and golden-tongued crook before long, you will oblige me by seeking out Vida Armistead at once and telling her that you have made one of your rare mistakes!"

"But, Lora, you don't mean —"

"There is one other thing you can do for me, the last I shall ever ask of you," she added, pausing on her way to the door. "Have the footman call my car. I wish to go home — at once — and alone."

She was about to pass him with an air of finality, when the abject misery on his over-fleshed face caught her attention. She stopped and regarded him thoughtfully for a moment.

"It seems to surprise you that a bad man can, by trying, turn himself into a good man."

But Partland plunged indiscreetly once more, and spoiled her softer mood. "You'll find him out in time," he insisted, his face flushed, his hands shaking with agitation. "No one could be what Julian Randolph has been and long satisfy a purist like you."

"I was about to add," she continued in a glacial voice, "it may also surprise you that friendships some-

times cease. However, the case of our own will convince you."

With a nod, she passed into the hall, then up the stairway to the dressing room.

CHAPTER XXXVII

AFTER ALL — THE CAVERNS

IT was just eleven o'clock when Lora reached home, although she had managed a satisfactory little chat with Vida upstairs. As she now traversed the Nelson hallway, she noticed that the desk lamp was still burning in her uncle's library. Tossing her chinchilla cloak to her maid, she tiptoed to the door and peered in, a truly radiant picture in her silver-threaded décolletage. But there was no one in the room to appreciate.

"He's gone to bed and forgotten the light again," she thought. "Uncle *is* getting old!"

Approaching his huge claw-foot desk, she was in the act of clicking off the current when the telephone standing at her right hand gave her inspiration. Sinking into the desk chair, she called a number.

"Hello, is this Judge Randolph's apartment?" she inquired. "I see. You don't expect him until later to-night. . . . This is Miss Nelson, Jube-Jube. I came home early and thought I'd call up to ask how Master Mulrooney is resting. . . . Can't go to sleep? . . . No, you certainly should not let him stay awake until the judge returns. Tell him I say sleep is the very best thing for a broken arm. Naturally he would be feverish this first night, but the best potion for him is sleep. . . . Well, tell him he'll have plenty of time to

talk to the judge to-morrow. . . . Good-night, Jube-Jube."

Before she hung up, the sound of a tune came faintly to her over the wire, hummed in the boy's uneven tones. The air was the very one Carrots had been whistling that afternoon before his accident.

Lora's eyes glistened as she continued it faintly to herself from the note where the replaced receiver had cut it off.

"He sure is one O.K. gent." She inserted the boy's tribute erratically into the music-hall melody. The shaded rays of the electric lamp shone softly upon her face and irradiated the smile that gradually settled around her lips, the tenderest smile that had found its way there for many a day. "He sure is one O.K. gent and everybody's bound to recognize the fact soon. Right you are, young Carrots! I shall always treasure you for so forcefully demonstrating the fact to me." Leaning her bare elbows on the desk, she sank into musing.

Lora was very happy this night. Perhaps through her defense of Julian at Vida's musicale, she felt nearer to him than ever before — and nearer to the joy of life. The misery of the past several weeks had fitted her to appreciate the relief, the exultation, the hope, that was now surging through her.

The near-tragedy of the ride had proven two vital facts to her. She loved Julian Randolph in so unalterable a way that his worthiness was as necessary as life-breath to her. His clemency of mind, his efforts toward uprightness, his physical courage and capability made him a man whose inspiration any woman might be glad to become.

Of course he had been true to her and his voluntary protestations! She was ashamed now of her pettiness in ever doubting that. Assurance lay in her woman's deep-souled conviction. She was proud to have been able to reinstate him in the opinion of her friend.

Robert Partland had gauged only half-results. Naturally he could not understand the disproportionate growth of conscience and will-power necessary to the smallest righteous achievement in Julian's case. Although poor old Robert had taken premature fright and must be taught a severe lesson, there was, after all, some palliation for him in the exaggerated concern he had felt in her welfare since her earliest childhood. But, before she forgave him, he must be convinced, all the world must be convinced, that Julian was a man worthy of her highest trust and her ideals.

Since his nomination his record had been clean, he had said. Then, of course — *of course* — with his quickening conscience to guide him and her devotion as reward, the future could not be other than "right." She was really to be happy then, happy as she had yearned to be, with no fear of disappointment, with the joy of youth, with pride?

Still smiling, her lips pursed themselves together, her head shook slightly from side to side as though in precious contemplation, her lashes slanted downward over the gray eyes as though a chief treasure lay before her on the scarlet blotter of the desk.

As she looked, however, surprise marred the joy of her expression, a vague annoyance, suddenly an active curiosity. For in front of her lay a neat pile of type-written sheets, signed at the bottom with a typed "Randolph, J."

The paper had all the appearance of the copy of a judicial opinion, such as her uncle had often shown her. She picked it up and noted the date — that of the next day, as dictated by the small calendar on the desk. How strange that the opinion should lie at this hour on her uncle's desk! How was it that a lawyer should have copies in advance at all?

She began to read through the legal phrases. Certainly Julian wrote as he talked, with decision! Then the gist of the sentences began to penetrate her brain. This, she realized, was the decision in the fight which her uncle was making for Traction against the new Public Service Commission. Her interest increased, for so partisan had been her stand on the side of the public that Uncle Bruce, unwontedly irritated by the expression of her views, had declared the subject taboo in the house.

With a foreboding difficult to explain, she glanced at the other papers on the desk. There were several typewritten copies of the judicial document, also in carbon, and one which seemed to be the original and lacked the typed "Randolph, J." Beside the pile of carbons lay several sheets in a scribble which she knew to be her uncle's, all scratched and interlined, giving evidence of careful study.

She took up the first of these and compared it with that which bore Julian's name. The context was identical.

The girl had lived too long in the home of Traction's chief counsel not to realize, if slowly, what it all meant. Her uncle had written decisions for judges before, when the cases involved big stakes. She had heard him laugh at the pluming these officials gave themselves when the

touch of his master hand had brought them public praise. She knew that these opinions were bought and paid for, that the price was usually as high as the deed was dishonorable.

Lora had no illusions regarding her relative and for him attempted no excuses. Although fond of him for his life of tenderness to her, she knew that, in plain terms, he was the crooked lawyer of a crooked corporation.

But the occasional protests which had followed her youthful disillusionments had been so angrily repulsed that she had come to realize she could never be her uncle's keeper. It was through the ignominy she had endured in her silent judgment of his methods that she had come to demand so vehemently a high standard for the man of her heart. Every woman, she reminded herself, was more or less the keeper of the man who loved her.

With that conviction and a ghastly fright leering at her from each word, she again seized the original and the copied sheets, matching them down to the last word of their polished construction.

At the end, she dropped the papers as though they had scorched her fingers. It was true then — it was *true!* Julian had allowed her uncle to dictate this vital decision against the people, was deliberately about to perpetrate a great civic wrong. No matter what method Traction had used to force him, the deed was heinous — it was the self-signed death-warrant of her respect for him who had so thrilled and satisfied her in the park only a few short hours before.

So that was what they both had been so busy over while she went with Partland to the musicale!

There could be no doubt about it. Her uncle had written the decision, and that very evening must have compared the typewritten copies with his script, in order that there should be no blunders in it, not even a misplaced mark of punctuation. The original would go to the judge in the morning for his official signature and by him would be handed down from the bench. The copies were doubtless for the newspapers.

And she? And *she*? Oh, unkind Heaven, that she was not too stupid to comprehend this crowning dishonor! That she should care so unalterably and still have the understanding and the strength to repudiate the man she loved!

She turned out the light, and, with the instinct of the blind, groped her way out to the hall. Up the stairs to her own iris-hung boudoir she climbed, instinctively longing for the maiden suite which meant aloneness to her. With a gesture that discouraged comment, she dismissed her waiting servant and sat in the chair before her desk, perhaps because it was straight-backed and hard, the chair to match her predicament.

What — *what* was to become of her, chained to this vicarious repentance, starved in her condemned surroundings, doomed to exist in the gloomy caverns sunk amid the altitudes of gladness toward which she had striven so long and so conscientiously?

With startling clamor, the telephone sounded close to her hand. Lifting the receiver from its silver-gray standard, she answered the call. Several times she asked the usual automatic questions before she realized. Then:

"Oh, Jube-Jube — you? . . . No, I have no idea where he can be found. I haven't seen Judge Randolph

this evening. . . . Why, I'm so sorry the poor little chap has taken a turn for the worse! Seems to be getting delirious, does he? . . . I really don't know what to suggest, except to try the doctor's house number again and leave word that he shall come as soon as he returns. . . . A fever is only to be expected after a bone-setting operation, but the doctor should have left you a sleeping potion. Sit over him and keep him as quiet as you can. The judge will certainly be home soon. I'll call up the first thing in the morning. /Good-night, Jube-Jube."

Slowly, with regret and trouble on her face, she hung up the receiver. One minute after, she jerked it off again.

"Taxi stand?" she asked after the number she named from memory had answered. "Send a car to Bruce Nelson's house at once, please. Just around the corner, yes."

She seized her cloak and pulled it on while descending the stairs. Just before she reached the street door, the grandfather's clock, standing at the curve of the stairway, rasped a long-winded warning that midnight had arrived. But Lora Nelson, zealot of conventions, threw back a defiant look into the face of the antique monitor who had bullied her about the passing hours ever since her childhood. Very softly she closed the front door and hurried down the steps under the *porte-cochère*.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

AGAIN — THE HEIGHTS

NEVER had the carefully shielded Miss Nelson started alone on an expedition at twelve at night. And she fully realized the unconventionality of yielding to her impulse. But she defended it to herself during the smooth-whirring drive across town and several times laughed softly from the sense of freedom it gave her.

"I'll call up in the morning, will I? What good would that do him to-night?" she demanded of the gloom-visions of her uncle, of Vida, of her set, that flocked reproachfully in the cab's dark interior. "Poor deserted lad, little tortured body with the hero soul — would he look at the clock, would he wait for a chaperone if a friend of his was sick and alone? I have no thought of seeing Julian in going — I don't care how it looks. To-night it seems more to me to be a human being than a social exquisite. I'll just satisfy myself as to whether there is anything I can do for Carrots and leave before Julian returns."

The Japanese manservant threw open the apartment door, stepped aside and bowed low, as was his custom.

"It is well you have returned, sir," he said. "Master Mulrooney is delirious and very —"

As the hem of shimmering draperies brushed past his feet, he lifted almond eyes to see, not the master he revered, but the beautiful Miss Nelson, without a hat

and wrapped in costly evening furs. Again he bowed, this time even lower than before, no muscle of his highly disciplined face betraying his amazement.

"The honorable judge — he has not yet returned."

"I did not come to see the judge," exclaimed Lora impatiently. "The boy, Carrots — how is he?"

"Master Mulrooney tosses about. He will not sleep. I have fear that the arm will be disturbed."

"I will see what I can do."

She followed the servant into what she knew must be Julian's sleeping room. Beneath the coverlet of the massive Georgian bed, stirred a thin form. On one pillow lay a wizened head, its flushed cheeks and tousled hair doubly colorful in the cool green light of the reading lamp. The boy's eyelids were closed, but his lips mumbled unintelligibly.

Lora tossed off her cloak and stepped toward the bed.

"Poor little Carrots," she murmured.

At the sound of her voice, his eyes, two blazing, red-brown coals, flashed open and stared at her. He saw in the shaft of light, which the green shield of the lamp deflected from his face, a vision; he saw woman, a radiant incarnation of mercy, sympathy, rest. His able arm stretched up, a rasping breath lifted his chest, one word trembled through his lips:

"Mother!"

Lora hurried forward and sank on her knees beside the bed. She was very moved. She laid cool hands on his forehead, smoothed the pillow, called him tender love-names which perhaps his own mother had called him before she died. From impetus of a yearning that was strange and compelling, she had Jube-Jube pull up

a large rocking chair, lay pillows across her lap and right arm and help to slide the thin, splinted body into her embrace. Then she rocked him, and gently — very gently patted him, and insinuated into his ears soothing words and low fragments of song.

The suffering of the child-face pressed against her, made her disregard the lavender orchids of her corsage. What was their royal color compared to the red blood of the mother-heart that had begun to beat within her breast? Something in the drag of the burden within her arms impressed her with understanding of the compensation in helpful endurance. "Mother," he had called her, the lonely lad.

Anxiously she watched his face while she rocked and murmured to him and hummed her bits of song. With satisfaction she soon noticed that the eyelids, closed at first in a twinge of pain, lay easily; that the lips ceased to mutter their incoherencies, that the whole shriveled body had relaxed. Surely he was almost asleep, her devoted little groom! But then, just as her hope seemed certainty, the telephone out in the foyer rang and startled him.

Jube-Jube answered. "Yes, your honor," Lora heard him say. "You'll be back in an hour? . . . Master Mulrooney is almost asleep. He is now —"

The Oriental, tactful to positive genius, glanced at the lovely midnight visitor and hesitated. Lora shook her head at him energetically, without words commanding that her presence should not be mentioned. Not by nod or expression did Jube-Jube show that he understood, but he hung up the receiver after the reiterated assurance that he would do his best with the invalid.

At a movement of the figure in her arms, Lora glanced

down to see that Carrots' eyes were up-staring at him.

"Was that him? I want to talk to him," he exclaimed excitedly.

"Time enough in an hour when he comes home, my boy," she soothed. "Try to get a little sleep. It will stop your arm to mend."

"Then put me back in the bed." The boy's manner showed that he realized his position and was embarrassed.

"You didn't rest easy in the bed, dear."

"I'm too big and heavy for you to hold."

"But I love to hold you. I love to rock you. Only try to go to sleep." She strained to settle him more comfortably. "Don't you love me enough to let me rock you, Carrots?"

A tide of red deeper than the fever stain flamed up to the freckled brow.

"Oh, miss, I like you like I do an angel! I like you next to — to him," he exclaimed in an obvious effort at appreciation. "It's only horses I can say I love — Charlemagne and Blond Bess. I reckon I ain't never felt close enough or sure enough of humans to put them in the same class with horses. But him I kinda seem to worship. And you, miss —" He choked with pitiful emotion.

Tears filled Lora's eyes as she nodded down at him. "I understand. It's hard for humans to come up to horses like Charlemagne and Blond Bess. But you're going to understand me and love me, too, in a way. You called me mother in your fever and that gives me some claim on you, don't you think? I've been planning to offer you a home at my house and an education

and a chance in life. You've done a lot for me and I'd like to do something for you. Would you like that, Carrots?"

"If — if I can't live at his house," agreed the boy drowsily.

Soon his body relaxed and his long, pale lashes drooped again. Smiles returned to Lora's lips as she began to rock and hum once more.

She saw that the orchids were all crushed on her silver lace. Too bad — they had been so beautiful, she thought! And yet, what did their ruin matter, if their velvet petals had cooled the boy's cheek, if his head had rested the least bit more easily against them? How did orchids or what they stood for in her life matter now? She was glad that they were crushed.

"Mother," the boy had called her in his subconscious and greater than conscious state, in recognition of something strange and clutching that had come to life within her only to-night.

"Mother. . . . Mother. . . . Mother." . . . How vast the word! In its two syllables was compressed all the meaning of life and sex and love, all the divine tolerance of womanhood, all the pain and bliss of God's scheme of compensation.

"Mother. . . . Mother. . . . Mother." She cradled the boy and rocked and hummed to the gentle symphony. And, although cradling and rocking and humming, she fell into a dream, the beauties of which she had never conceived before. It seemed as though little might-be children flew up from the mausoleum of her heart, fluttered spirit-wings in the air about, fanned dry the tears in her eyes, pressed dearly to her cheeks and lips.

She forgot the cramp of her burden, forgot Jube-Jube, forgot the flying minutes. She lost all fear that Julian might return; in fact, forgot his existence, except that he was the beginning, the end, the all of her dream. Vida had told her once that she would make terms when she really loved. Vida loved and knew. A sudden glory of enlightenment lit her mind, the meaning of universal motherhood. What was the use of her understanding and her strength, of Julian's finer perceptions, of their love, if together they might not conquer? Why might not she, through right, lift him to their love's level as well as that Traction, through greed, should drag him down? Why had she this passionate sympathy for the people, if not to fight for them? Why — *why* was she a woman, a heart, a soul, if not to help, rather than condemn?

Flushed, startled, already exultant in preconceived triumph, Lora reached a resolve. She would tear to tatters her past stupid absolutisms of inexperience; she would strive to mother Julian Randolph through her great human love for him; she would forgive him his blunders and weaknesses, would inspire him and compel him into better ways. Make terms? She would indeed make terms — the best possible terms for Julian.

When finally she consigned Carrots, deeply sleeping, to the bed, the Japanese brought her a cup of steaming chocolate to drink. But as, with a glance of gratitude, she reached out her hand to take it, the porcelain fell and broke upon the floor, so completely had her mind overruled any sense of physical exhaustion.

Although she left the apartment before Julian returned, she felt as though she had seen him — had seen and talked with him at length.

CHAPTER XXXIX

IN CHAMBERS

TO go to Julian in the morning before court opened was Lora's resolution. Surely, for her sake, at the plea she would make, he would refuse to hand down this decision which her uncle had written for the benefit of Traction and the defrauding of the public! For her sake he would turn his broad back upon the corruptionists as he had turned it upon the party when the politicians who had elevated him tried to tamper with justice.

So it was that, pale but exquisitely sweet of expression, she arose to greet the judge in his outer office upon his arrival next morning.

That Julian was surprised to see her was patent, but she studied him in vain to decide whether there was in his greeting any trace of effort. He looked more haggard than she had ever seen him and his eyes shone more brilliantly than usual from behind their heavy lids. But his manner was, as always, irreproachable.

"I planned to come to you this afternoon," he said as he followed her into his chambers and closed the door.

She turned and faced him. "When it would have been too late, Julian."

An attempted smile saddened rather than cheered his face. "More suspicions, Lora?"

Intrepidly the girl lifted to his face her beautiful, honest eyes. "Not suspicions — *facts* this time," she

said. "I have come to you this morning to test your love for me, Julian, not for the sake of testing it, but for an object that is worth while. I am going to ask you to do something hard for me. You are going to do it, and it will help to make us very happy. I — I know —"

"Yes, Lora," he encouraged gently as she hesitated.

From a table nearby she picked up a wooden paper knife. Grasping it firmly in both her gloved palms, as though it lent her support, she continued rapidly:

"I know that you are to hand down an opinion in the Consolidated Traction case this morning. I happen also to know that Uncle Bruce wrote the decision. Julian, you must not side against the people in this case. No matter what pressure they put upon you, no matter —"

"Did he — did your uncle tell you this?" If she had attempted to stab him with the frail weapon she held, Julian could not have looked more surprised, more hurt.

"Dear, don't let us waste time on side issues," she urged. "There need be no evasions between us now, for I know your strength as well as your weakness. I saw the first draft in his own hand and the copy he sent for your signature this morning. You have made a grave mistake, Julian, but there is still time to right it. You have been untrue to your trust, but only in thought, and I know they must have oppressed you heavily. But you will — you must — *Don't be angry*," she interrupted herself, suddenly caught by the strange, resentful look of him as he stared at her. "There is no time for anger. There is no time for anything but plain words between us. You must do this because I love you and ask it. You must think —"

think — and decide how best to do justice to the public before you go into court. . . . Julian, surely you are not —”

She paused, her heart pounding ominously. Her words tripped in a gasp of fear; for Julian still focused upon her that strange, aloof stare.

“So you believe that I have let your uncle write my opinion, do you?” With the question, although his eyes and mouth looked bitter, he vented that low, melodious “Julian Randolph laugh.” The sound of it terrified her more than anything he had said.

“I — I know it,” she declared.

“Then all my past efforts haven’t given you the least germ of faith in me?”

“If I had no faith I shouldn’t be here, Julian.”

“Tell me,” he asked, “could a woman such as you really love a man who would let her dictate the right and wrong of his life to him? If I weren’t a man for my own sake, I should think that you —”

“Better let a woman dictate than Consolidated Traction,” interrupted Lora, albeit unsteadily, for all her senses were swimming in dread of the next words of this stranger before her.

“Be seated, please,” said Julian in a stilted way, and himself settled at his desk. “I have studied the case carefully. The points of law involved are fine ones. Justice must be done the people, but care should be taken not to do injustice to the corporation.”

“Injustice could scarcely be done Traction, could it?”

“Injustice may be done anywhere,” he replied, with emphasis.

As she looked across at him over the unaccountable

space that seemed to be widening between them, the meaning of defeat clutched her. Her eyes shrank from his hard gaze. Lowering, they fell upon a document on his desk. Indubitably she recognized it as the first copy of the opinion she had studied in such detail. All the despair of last night, before she had started on her mission of mercy, revisited her. All that imposing conception of universal motherhood, upreared in her vigil, fell in decay about her. The brave words she had planned, her irrefutable plea, wailed upward from her heart, only to halt, afraid, on her lips.

"I — I don't understand you this morning, Julian." She forced herself into what she could remember of last night's exaltation. "I thought yesterday that there would be no more misunderstandings between us — that there could be none. You have acknowledged to me that the methods which put you on the bench were not what they should have been. But I know of one way to atone for them — to make yourself the most upright judge in the entire State. Make your emblem of office really your robe of honor. The only time in which any one has to fight is the *now*, Julian. Your greatest fault has been your temporizing. Can't you promise me, not that you will take my dictation about this case, but that you will decide it absolutely according to your own conscience before you go into court? If you will promise that, I shall be satisfied. It means everything — *everything* to me, Julian."

The cruel expression of his face softened. With an impatient gesture he pushed back the dark, thick hair from his forehead and walked over to stand before her, gazing down upon her more as though curious than angry.

"You seem to know a great deal, Lora, but evidently not everything about this case. Is it news to you that if I promise what you ask, they will probably force me from the bench?"

Startled, she sprang to her feet and faced him.

"If it means leaving the bench, leave it, Julian. Would that matter much?"

He shook his head dubiously. "And it was for you that I struggled to gain the honor!"

"But life is not the victory, Julian. *Life is the fight.* Even though it is a harder and longer fight to be honest, it is more of life. Can't you — won't you promise?"

"I would do anything for you that was possible, Lora. You believe that, don't you? But in this matter I must follow my own judgment. I made my decision irrevocably several days ago — remember that. If I did a thing that seemed right to you merely to please you, you would never —"

A knock at the door silenced him. His clerk entered.

"They are waiting for you in the court room, Mr. Justice," Herder said. "I — I disliked to interrupt, but it is after the hour."

With the most poignant sensation of impotency of her young life, Lora saw him pick up from his desk the draft of the decision which her uncle had written. She walked to a window overlooking the park. Julian followed and, with the same harassed look she had noted on their entry into the room, stooped to whisper something close to her ear.

"I love you, Lora," was what he said.

She heard his hurried step across the room, then the door quietly closed. He had gone — gone with the decision in his hand! And he had not promised her,

When her gaze shifted to the teeming procession of workers hurrying across the park below, she noticed that the paper cutter, which she still clutched, was broken in two. He had not promised her!

CHAPTER XL

JUSTICE AT THE BAR

NO convicted criminal up for sentence ever turned toward a court room with a heavier heart than did the queenly Miss Nelson this morning. The desire to see and hear Justice Randolph as he pronounced the words that were to kill her life happiness came to her suddenly after the elevator had carried her to the ground floor. She found in the idea a morbid attraction, such as holds mourners over the mortal remains of their dead.

Under the guidance of an attendant she went straight to the room in which Judge Randolph was holding court. Despite the fact that she had lived her life in a highly legal atmosphere, she had never before entered a court room. Her absence had been the result of one of her uncle's rare commands. Once she had expressed a desire to hear him argue an important case, but so dictatorial had been his refusal and so obvious his annoyance that she had not urged the caprice. That other time when she and Vida had asked for passes to the Nordhoff murder trial, neither the outraged expression which had come to his face, nor the finality with which he had vetoed their proposal could be forgotten.

The remembrance that the veteran attorney would be present this morning caused her to halt nervously at the door. He never would understand her presence, and

doubtless would be violently displeased. But the thought did not affect her determination; she only hoped in a benumbed sort of way that he might not notice her.

She shrank into the very last seat of the number allotted to spectators, pulled down, it seemed to her, by the weight of her heart, and huddled shivering in her furs. The crowd was considerable, especially within the enclosure for members of the bar, so that some seconds elapsed before she distinguished the spare figure of her uncle. She looked also for Robert Partland, and felt vaguely relieved not to find him. Partland would have understood too well why she was there.

Through the expectation of the majority, her eyes soon became directed to a door at the side of the room. As though with guilt, she sank further into her seat and clutched her hands together within her muff; then the door opened suddenly to admit Julian, his clerk at his heels.

Lora had never before seen him in the costume of his office — the skirts of justice — and an equivocal pleasure which was, after all, mostly bitterness, seized her. Why, *why*, when he looked so much like her kind of a king, could he not live up to the lines of the part?

Despairingly her eyes clung to him as he ascended the bench and faced the group of distinguished attorneys within the rail. He did not waste a single glance upon the spectators. In his hand he still held the typewritten sheet which she had examined in her uncle's library — which would become his opinion by the annexation of his scrawled "Randolph, J."

When he began to read it, Lora sipped the last nauseous drops of her misery. In her own previous study

of the paper certain of its phrases had become indelibly stamped upon her mind. As she recognized them now, falling from Julian's lips in his famous judicial voice, she knew that up to that moment she had hoped — that to the very last, upheld by the vapid faith of women when they love, she had *believed* that somehow the final blow might be averted.

"Investments in public utilities should not be disparaged, lest the public itself, in the long run, be made to suffer," read Justice Randolph with magnificent enunciation.

"How Uncle Bruce does like to safeguard the poor public!" commented a strange, cynical voice deep down in the girl's heart.

"The legislature was wise in providing for the judicial review of orders or decrees of the Public Service Commission when they relate to the reduction of rates, which may mean the diminution of income by hundreds of thousands of dollars annually." Word by word the sentences rolled from her memory to match those of the judge.

"Judicial review?" muttered the alien voice within her. "Judicial review, by Uncle Bruce!"

As the reading continued, Lora feared lest she had overestimated her strength. One minute she felt that she must faint from sheer despair, the next that she must rise and scream aloud the anguish of her heart. Gropingly, she felt for the back of the bench in front of her with the intent of steadying herself and slipping away from the torture chamber; then her half stupefied senses became penetrated by a pause in the reading. The paper on which was recorded her guardian's masterpiece fell to the stand in front of the judge.

She glanced at her uncle's face. The anticipatory smile which had previously held it faded. Probably any break in the reading was distasteful to him. He sat staring fixedly at the judge. Randolph's eyes were sweeping the room for the first time.

Suddenly, with an electric shock, she realized that they were focused directly upon her, brilliant, reproachful, triumphant. She sat straight in her seat and listened with terrible concentration to the words he was now speaking; a queer jumble of words these, words which she had never heard before. Julian's voice had a clarion ring as he spoke them. His eyes never left her face.

"I have been reading from a motion which the learned counsel for the Traction Corporation voluntarily prepared for me. It shows the decision they would like the court to reach. It is clear that the Public Service Commission has the right to order this reduction of rates. It is equally clear that the court has the power of review as to the reasonableness of the order. The court has so reviewed and finds the single fare entirely reasonable. The motion to quash the writ of mandamus made in behalf of Consolidated Traction is denied. Mr. Clerk, call the next case."

What — *what* had happened? *What* did it mean? Dropping her muff to the floor, Lora again leaned forward and grasped the bench in front, but not for aid to rise. She peered from face to face about her, studying the general surprise breathlessly. Especially did she note the rage, the amazement that distorted her relative's face. A half delirious sprite of joy sprang up and choked the bitter voice that tried again to speak in her heart. She saw her uncle gather up his papers and,

a thunder-cloud of outraged expectation, prepare to leave the room. An imminent desire that he should not see her hurried Lora also to her feet and toward the door. But before passing through it, she turned and directed into Julian's waiting eyes a look, the apology and radiance of which glorified all the struggles of his after life.

She did not quit the building, but hurried to the chambers of the young justice to await his coming on the adjournment of court. A thousand fine sentences of congratulation shaped themselves in her mind. But when at last he came to her, she could not speak. She just stretched out her two hands and looked at him.

As he grasped them, Julian shook his head dolefully.

"They may try to impeach me before the legislature," he said. "But if they oust me they'll have to fight for the pleasure."

"Julian, *why* did you have Uncle Nelson —?"

"I wanted to prove my stand. That seemed the most forceful way."

"Then why didn't you tell me?" she asked, too glad for real reproach.

"I hurt you for a moment, I know, Lora, but it was to establish your confidence in me, to show you that my stand was foreplanned for a cause even better than your request — for the cause of justice."

"But why — *why* —" she continued tremulously.

"Because I was hurt, too, dear, at your lack of faith — only a little bit hurt, and for just a moment, though; for I know that on account of my past, I deserve suspicion. It will take time to build up your absolute faith."

"Say, rather, it *has* taken time, Julian."

He squared his shoulders and threw back his head with a look as exalted as her own.

"I have won my great fight — I have conquered myself. Whether I continue on the bench or not, I have been the people's judge."

"You are my judge! You are *my* judge!" she exclaimed with a woman's instinctive jealousy.

"Yes, Lora," he smiled. "And I am because you have always been mine!"

CHAPTER XLI

HIS ROBE OF HONOR

ON the Rim of the Grand Canyon of the Colorado Justice and Mrs. Julian Randolph leaned forward to look, straightened involuntarily, then leaned to look again.

Before and below them stretched the most stupendous canvas of Nature's scenic handiwork; opulent in its colors of high-noon, mystic in the veils of haze that wrapped its nether shapes, its almost inconceivable vastness suggested by the tinsel thread of a river twining among its deepest plateaus—a river which, in truth, was one of North America's mightiest despots. Not a whisper of the stream's power reached the rarefied atmosphere of the El Tovar Rim; only the detail of the canyon's architectural formations of granite, sandstone and marble testified to its enormity. Except for the number of these and the piercing peaks and vaporous gorges, its distances would never have taxed the imagination.

"Divine abyss!" murmured Julian.

At even his suppressed voice Lora lifted a finger to her lips, then herself, in tones scarcely more than a whisper, quoted: "'The suddenness of it, the size of it—the silence of it!'"

"Strangely enough," said Julian after a time, "it

fills me with something of the same emotions I felt when among the *chateaux* of Old France."

Lora glanced up with a look that failed to be reproving because of the facile smiles that had grown accustomed to her lips during the six weeks of the realization of dreams since she and Julian had left New York.

"You should be a good American as well as a perfect bridegroom," she said. "Didn't you pack your patriotism in your bag? What are European castles compared to this? I can never regret America's youth after to-day — after the canyon."

"But, my dear, the castles of France and the castles of the Colorado have more than cornices and battlements and spires in common — they have antiquity, nobility. They reproach me with my youngness and my wrongness — my general human nothingness. Why, standing here, the thought of what I have been and what I have done is almost too much for —"

"Julian." The woman who was happy interrupted with more than the name and the voice of her happiness; she clasped both hands about the arm of her lover, her comrade, her "husband-child"; she raised eyes in whose gray depths shone fervor for him, fearlessness for him, faith in him. "Antiquity and nobility must be achieved. Those *chateaux* in France have not always been, any more than this divine abyss. The tragedies that were once enacted within their crumbling, lichened walls — think, Julian, of the past vileness and violence of their inmates as told in history! The castles stand for nobility, yes; but they achieved it, didn't they, through ages of carnage, of the eternal struggle between sin and righteousness?"

"Why, dear — Why, Lora —" exclaimed Julian, his attention deserting the splendor of the scene before them for the splendor of her thought.

"And this mystic chasm," she continued glowingly, "do you imagine that it was easily made or made in an hour of time?"

"I — I see what you mean, Lora."

"But I want you, through seeing what I mean, Julian, to see yourself. The castles of Old France that shamed you were made by man, gained their antiquity housing human passions. The castles of this canyon were hewn by the passions of nature, by the rages of water and wind and storm since prehistoric ages. But serene as they look, vast as is this gorge, the achievements of the human heart are surpassing. Where are loftier heights —"

"Or unworthier depths?" shuddered Julian.

"You started in chaotic wrong, my Julian. You housed passions and temptations and failures. In time you housed triumphs. You are at peace with yourself and right with your world now — even Uncle Bruce realized that when he turned his back on his threat of your impeachment."

"I am afraid," inserted Julian with a tender smile, "that the threat of an absolute break with his nearest and dearest relative, that your plea for his coöperation in our first and last performance at St. Thomas' Church had more to do with his fighting my fight against the Traction corporation than any conviction regarding me."

Lora laughed a low, exultant laugh.

"At any rate, he did keep away from that partisan legislature and we are here, happier than my utmost

imaginings of happiness. Your judicial office is saved and it is positively exalting to think that for a dozen years and more to come you will deal out absolute justice. Why, Julian —" She stepped back to inspect him — "already you look a good deal like nobility to me!"

But Julian did not join in her fond laugh. He doffed his hat and turned his gaze into the incredible spaces of the gorge. His face glowed with seemingly reflected radiance as he said:

"When you speak to me like that, Queen-wife — you who so suitably wear the color of royalty — you make me sure that I shall always wear my robe with honor."

THE END

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